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Authentic Recipes from
Around the World

Authentic Recipes



• from around the World •



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© Emma-Jayne Abbots, Rocío Carvajal, Anna Charalambidou, Elaine Forde, Ana Martins, Hazel Thomas, and Deborah Toner.

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Introduction: Consuming Authenticity

It was a little under a decade ago that I first visited Mexico and started to think about the cultural importance of cuisine and consumption. Although I had read about the history of food in Mexico and was going there to research historical documents about alcoholic drinks, I was staggered by the diversity and vibrancy of a culinary culture that—at least back then—had such a limited reputation in the UK. This taught me that experiencing the cuisine of different parts of the world, of different regions within our own countries or of different traditions is a process of discovery, often joyous and surprising, a way of learning about our own and others' heritage.

It is therefore with great excitement that I find myself introducing this book, *Authentic Recipes from Around the World*, in which we try to encourage some thoughtful reflection on what the term “authenticity” means when we talk about foods and drinks. In particular, we want to think about how history, time and temporality can be used to make particular cultural products seem “authentic” or the “real” thing. Temporal categories like “origins”, “traditions” and “timelessness,” and the emotional connections they can evoke, like feelings of nostalgia and belonging, are at the heart of our approach.

The book is part of a larger research project, *Consuming Authenticities: Time, Place and the Past in the Construction of Authentic Foods and Drinks*, which is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in relation to their major research theme, *Care for the Future: Thinking Forward through the Past*. We are exploring authenticity in relation to foods and drinks from different parts of the world that feature in this book: pulque (an alcoholic drink from central Mexico), flaounes (celebration Easter pies from Cyprus), Welsh craft cider, and acarajé (a street snack from Brazil). Our work also combines academic expertise with the expertise of various practitioners: food and drink producers, chefs, food writers, heritage and museum professionals and others. We hope to foster increased awareness about the complexity of cultural and historical relationships involved in the culinary sphere and in defining authenticity, by bringing together people and perspectives from food cultures around the world.

What makes authenticity?

Authenticity is not a single thing, nor, in an objective, final sense, is it real. Authenticity is defined in different ways and for different reasons according to perspective; it is often more subjectively felt or experienced than objectively observed, and it operates on a spectrum rather than in absolutes. In the case of a recipe for a particular dish, it is very difficult, probably impossible, to find a single recipe that will satisfy *everyone's* view of what that dish should be—accounting for individual tastes, family traditions, regional specialities, local ingredients, historical techniques and so on. But it is often easier to reach consensus on some recipes being more or less authentic than others.

Why does it matter?

Of course, in legal, commercial and cultural terms, claims to authenticity for this or that food or drink are regularly made, often in absolute terms. Culinary products can depend on ideas about authenticity for commercial success, drawing emotional responses from consumers and evoking a sense of local, ethnic or even national identity through their consumption. But to describe such foods or drinks as authentic can be a politically, economically and culturally charged process, particularly

when it means labelling a different, rival version or product inauthentic. In this sense, authenticity can be a central ingredient in the celebration and commemoration of different identities, social practices and histories. However, it can also marginalise, exclude, exploit or damage others, and so it is important to understand how such ideas come about.

Authenticity, Time, Place and the Past

These complicated issues around authenticity have long been studied by scholars of food and, to a lesser but still important extent, alcoholic drinks. A unifying theme across this research is the recognition that elitist, exclusionary and culturally imperialist viewpoints can sometimes inform how foods and drinks are projected as authentic, although claims to authenticity can also be used to defend against these viewpoints in other contexts. Much of the scholarship dwells on the role of place and locality in promoting images of authenticity, especially in terms of how particular people or places are identified as the origin point of authentic foodstuffs. Also widely explored have been the concepts of *terroir* and the formal legal frameworks that recognise and protect the special provenance of certain products, such as *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* enjoyed by champagne. Categories of time, temporality and history certainly haven't been ignored, but they have generally been given less attention than place, locality and globalisation. We aim to bring both perspectives together, by considering the roles played by historical knowledge, narratives about the past and future, and temporal concepts such as timelessness, nostalgia, origins and traditions.

What do a Mexican drink, a Cypriot pastry, a Brazilian croquette and Welsh cider have in common?

This might sound like the opener for a convoluted punch-line, but we deliberately chose to focus on foods and drinks that came from very different backgrounds and that would be unfamiliar to people outside of their own regional or national experience. This was so that we could compare similarities and differences in the way that authenticity is expressed in each case, at the same time as stoking people's natural curiosity about the culinary cultures of other parts of the world.

Each chapter of the recipe book explores more fully the different things that go into making these foods and drinks authentic, but I will point to a few interesting findings here:

- In all 4 cases, the people involved in producing the food or drink are central to how its authenticity is defined. This is perhaps unsurprising, especially when producers themselves reflect on why their product is or is not authentic. But there is considerable variation in *how* the person's characteristics contribute to the product's authenticity: skill, knowledge, length of experience, pride, passion, family relationships, links to the locality or neighbourhood, appearance, racial, ethnic or national identity.
- The importance of place to a food or drink's authenticity is often intertwined with a sense of that place's historical significance and can be very politically charged. In this sense, people's different views on where acarajé can be consumed "authentically" reveal much about the legacy of Brazil's colonial past, while flaoues are invoked in reconciliatory politics aimed at healing past divisions between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots.
- There is often no straightforward relationship between authenticity and the time involved in producing the food and drink. The slow labour of love in the making of both pulque and

cider are valorised, but the very short time in which pulque is viable and pleasant to drink is also seen as part of its enigma, while dexterity and swiftness in certain stages of making acarajé and flaounes demonstrates their producers' skill and knowledge.

- “Tradition” is as complicated, multidimensional and difficult to define as authenticity itself, but key to whether or not claims to authenticity are accepted. Tradition might be family-based and thus lead to many subtle variations in the way a food or drink is prepared, while making it no less authentic. Tradition might be rooted in the method of production, avoiding the use of modern tools and techniques. Tradition might be firmly or loosely tied to a specific origin point in the past, a myth or an interpretation of history. It might refer to all of these things simultaneously, or entirely different forms of tradition.

I hope readers will draw many other conclusions from what follows, and think about how the authenticities of foods and drinks from their own experience have been portrayed and debated in different ways. And for those who feel that the only way to truly learn about a food or drink is to try it (and who would disagree?), we hope that our recipes and stories will inspire you to get stuck in!

Acknowledgements and List of Contributors

The financial support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council has made this book possible and we hope it makes a strong contribution to the research around the *Care for the Future: Thinking Forward through the Past* theme. Everyone at the People's Collection Wales has had a special role in developing the project and they were fantastic hosts for a workshop in May 2015 where we gathered a lot of material for the book. Thanks also to the Institute of Latin American Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, for supporting the book launch so enthusiastically, and to David Gentilcore, Mike Goodman, Nuno Domingos and Rosina Marquez Reiter for their guidance in the early stages of the project. Above all, we are enormously grateful to all those who have generously given their time and shared their ideas with us in the course of developing this book. Your collaborative energy and passion for food and drink have been nothing short of inspirational.

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Thanks also to everyone who has participated on an anonymous basis.



Pulque and pulque bread, Puebla, Mexico.

Photograph by Rocio Carvajal, 2015.

Pulque in Mexico Then and Now

Introduction:

“The state of Oaxaca is for many the mecca of Mexican cuisine. Being there and drinking pulque, where pulque’s not easy to find – it dies or goes so very quickly – and in a very rustic environment, an unpretentious setting... For me, having pulque that time, was, wow, I’m drinking something that was used in religious ceremonies more than one thousand years ago. And it takes around 10 years for the plant to grow, and the drink dies in a couple of days, so for me having that pulque was, wow, I’m drinking something that is unique... you are drinking years of history.”

Edson Díaz Fuentes, Chef/writer. Interview, 2015.

The history of pulque is the history of Mexico. It is a product – an alcoholic drink – that reveals shifts in the ways that Mexico’s intangible and culturally diverse heritage has been understood and experienced by different social and ethnic groups within Mexico, and by non-Mexicans around the world. However, it is a product with which many people, especially outside of Mexico, are deeply unfamiliar and one whose future is uncertain. In this section of the book, we explore pulque’s place in Mexico’s culinary history and traditions, as they have developed over many centuries.

Pulque is a naturally fermented alcoholic beverage made from specific varieties of the maguey or agave plant, which has been produced in central Mexico for over a thousand years. Until the early to mid 20th century, pulque was Mexico’s most popular and widely consumed alcoholic drink, being produced mainly on large agricultural estates and sold in both rural areas and in hundreds of pulque-selling bars (*pulquerías*) in Mexico City and other urban centres. From about the middle of the 20th century, drinks like beer and tequila rose in popularity, particularly in urban areas, and pulque consumption became increasingly confined to rural regions.

The reasons for this decline in popularity are complex, partly relating to the nature of pulque as a product compared to the more commercially adaptable drinks like beer, tequila and mezcal. But it is also because of the symbolic connections that pulque has with traditional Mexico, indigenous Mexico and lower class Mexico.



Pulque in jícara bowl, Puebla, Mexico.

Photograph by Rocio Carvajal, 2015.

The Mexico we know today is the product of centuries of cultural and ethnic interchanges and conflicts that have been encoded into Mexico's foods and drinks. Dozens of different indigenous communities with their own worldviews, cultural norms and languages lived within Mexico when the Spanish began the process of conquest and colonisation in the early 16th century. The Aztecs were the most well-known of these indigenous groups, but there were also the Tlaxcaltec, Mixtec, Zapotec, Otomí and Texcocan peoples to name just a few. To this ethnic diversity was then added Spanish heritage with its own multiple regional identities: Galician, Asturian, Catalanian, Basque and so on. During the colonial period (1521-1810), large populations of mixed heritage people – with mixed Spanish, indigenous and/or African backgrounds – developed, as did a mestizo (mixed) cuisine.

Conflicts, hierarchies and tensions between different social and ethnic groups of people in colonial Mexico were often reflected in the cultural meanings attached to particular foods and drinks. Corn tortillas, such a fundamental part of Mexican cuisine, were looked down upon in this period by the wealthy as inferior to wheat bread. In the 19th century there were specious attempts to “scientifically” prove that wheat was not only nutritionally superior to corn, but also that societies where wheat was a staple food were generally more “advanced” than those who depended on corn. Similarly, over time, pulque, more so than other alcoholic drinks, became associated with a negative view of lower class and indigenous identities, as well as with social problems and a lack of modernity. In the 20th century, beer and tequila were promoted as more modern or more Mexican drinks than pulque, both by manufacturers and government policies. While pulque has always had its defenders, the symbolic changes in pulque's status over time have had an effect: pulque's once dominant place in Mexico's urban drinking culture has been supplanted by beer, while pulque's claim to being Mexico's “national” drink has been superseded by tequila and, to a lesser extent, mezcal.

Pulque remains indisputably unique to Mexico, but its status as an authentic part of Mexican culinary heritage is in tension with these other drinks. Its long and complex history, its slow-growing source plant and transient life-span as a drink, its connection to particular regions, places and family traditions, and its distinctive, unusual taste all go into explaining pulque's changing role in shaping Mexican culture and identity.



Magueys, Teotihuacan de Arista, Mexico.

Photograph by William Neubeisel, 2009.
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Production of Pulque

Pulque production has been concentrated in the high plains of central and south-central Mexico for more than a thousand years. In this region, the cold and semi-dry climate, together with the rich soils of the transvolcanic belt, provide ideal growing conditions for the agave or maguey plant. Sweet sap, known as aguamiel or neutli, is extracted from the heart of this plant and fermented naturally to produce pulque. The tlachiquero, the person in charge of extracting the sap, is key to the production, which remains a largely manual process. Pulque was made in large-scale commercial operations from the 17th century to the mid 20th century, but due to difficulties of preservation, production was not mechanised nor was pulque exported. Some canned brands of pulque have become available internationally since the 1990s, but many consumers feel that these pasteurised, tinned products differ considerably from fresh pulque.

The Agave

Of the more than 250 different varieties of agave found in Mexico, only 4 are used to extract the sap to produce pulque. Those are manso, cenizo and ayoteco, and a wild variety known as cimarrón. Agave plants take 8 to 12 years to mature, flowering at the end of their life-cycle, and the sap must be extracted shortly before this maturation. They are grown primarily in the states of Mexico, Puebla, Hidalgo and Tlaxcala and the quality of the pulque produced is often attributed to the species of plant together with the land and climate in which it is grown.

“The difference [between good and bad pulque] is not so much dependent on the manner of making it, but on the different types of agave plants, on “castrating” the fruit at the right time and waiting for maturity to scrape it, and above all on the class of land in which they are planted and the climate of that place. And so, of the pulques that come into Mexico City, the finest and best are those harvested from the plains of Apam [in Hidalgo and Tlaxcala].”

Mariano Galvan Rivera, *El nuevo cocinero mexicano* (The New Mexican Cook), 1845.



Improvisada pulquería en una kermesse de la colonia Francesa [Make-shift pulquería during a fiesta in the Francesa neighbourhood] Archivo Casasola, Fototeca Nacional, Mexico City, 1920.

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The Tlachiquero and the Tinacal

In the 18th and 19th centuries, these agave plants were mostly grown in large agricultural estates called haciendas, on which the tasks involved in the making of pulque – tending the

plants, harvesting the sap and overseeing its fermentation – were often done by different skilled workers. On smaller landholdings, much more common today, most of these jobs are done by *tlachiqueros*. The term *tlachiquero* historically refers to the person who harvested the *aguamiel*, but now *tlachiqueros* generally carry out all stages of pulque production.

Just before the agave matures, the *tlachiquero* cuts back the outer leaves of the plant and exposes the central stem and leaves it to age for about 3 or 4 months. Once the agave has matured the central stem is removed and the heart of the agave is opened using a machete or a *tajadera* – a double edged and curved knife with a wooden handle – to remove the leaves around the freshly open hole.

Using the *ocaxtle* or scraper, a sharp metallic spoon-like tool, the *tlachiquero* scrapes the hollow interior of the agave in order to cause the slow dripping of sap that will remain contained in the interior until it is collected.

To collect the *aguamiel* the *tlachiquero* unwraps the leaves that are deliberately placed to cover the carved hole. Using the *ocaxtle* he cleans and removes any organic matter or insects. Afterwards a hollow and dried *acocote*, a long gourd shell with two small holes at both ends is introduced. The *tlachiquero* gently sucks out the air from the upper hole and fills the *acocote* as much as possible, then transfers the *aguamiel* to wooden or plastic containers. Each agave plant will only produce *aguamiel* for a period no longer than 4 months and it can produce from 500ml to 3 litres a day depending on the variety and health of the plant.

After collecting *aguamiel* from several agaves, it is taken to ferment at the *tlachiquero*'s own *tinacal* (a cool and dry room), or to a communal or private one. In the *tinacal* multiple tanks contain *aguamiel* or pulque at different stages of fermentation and these are topped up with fresh *aguamiel* periodically. Some roots or barks can be mixed with the new *aguamiel* to speed up fermentation. Each producer tends to have their own different method of managing this process which is passed down through families or learned through experience.

Traditionally the fermenting containers were made of cow skin. Nowadays the use of plastic containers is more common. Although the fermentation process can take from 7 to 14 days, the



Tlachiquero saca aguamiel con acocote [Tlachiquero extracting agave sap with acocote] Archivo Casasola, Fototeca Nacional, Mexico City, 1915.

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Agave open and carved to extract the sap, San Mateo Ozolco, Puebla, Mexico.

Photograph by Rocio Carvajal, 2015.



Tlachiqueros vacían pulque en un contenedor del tinacal [Tlachiqueros empty pulque into a container in the tinacal] Archivo Casasola, Fototeca Nacional, Mexico City, 1910.

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Periodistas del periódico “El Novedades” en la puerta del Tinacal “La Reina Xochitl” [Journalists of the newspaper “Novelties” in the doorway of the tinacal “Queen Xóchitl”] Archivo Casasola, Fototeca Nacional, Mexico City, 1950-55.

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high content of sugars in the aguamiel begins fermenting from the very same day it is collected. Partly because of the rapid way in which pulque ferments, it does not travel well and attempts to preserve, bottle or otherwise store it for transport outside central Mexico were unsuccessful until quite recently. Several brands of canned pulque are now available, although the enzymes and pasteurisation process, used to stop fermentation, do affect the flavour.

“I actually tried it in New York and I was quite excited to see tinned pulque in Brooklyn or in Queens in a Mexican restaurant... but I didn’t like it, didn’t finish it actually, couldn’t drink more than two, three sips... Pulque, it’s a live product because it’s fermented and it’s life. And I think that’s something to consider. Yeah, you can put it in a tin or in a bottle and sell it and export it, but you lose its authenticity, or its flavour, or what makes it unique in the first place.”

Edson Díaz Fuentes, Chef/writer. Interview, 2015.

Time, Knowledge, Place and Authenticity in Pulque Production

In 1803-4, the Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt visited Mexico – then still part of the Spanish empire – and included an extensive description of agave and pulque cultivation in his encyclopaedic study of the country’s geography, economy and culture. He dwelt at length on the importance of the land and judgment of the producers to the production of pulque:

“The finest cultivations which I have had occasion to see are in the valley of Toluca and on the plains of Cholula. The agaves there are planted in rows at a distance of 15 decimetres [58 inches] from one another. The plants only begin to yield the juice which goes by the name of honey, on account of the sugary principle with which they abound, when the hampe [shaft or flower] is on the point of its development. It is on this account of the greatest importance for the cultivator to know exactly the period of efflorescence. Its proximity is announced by the direction of the radical leaves, which are observed by the Indians with much attention... The cultivator goes daily through his agave plantations to mark those plants which approach efflorescence. If he has any doubt, he applies to the experts of the village, old Indians, who, from long experience, have a judgment or rather tact more securely to be relied on.”

Alexander von Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, 1814.

Humboldt communicates a sense of respect for the experience and knowledge of the indigenous people controlling the production of pulque in the early 1800s, as well as pointing to the importance of growing the agave plants in the right location and conditions. The complex ethnic and social divisions within Mexico meant that respect for this knowledge and indigenous heritage was often lacking. Although pulque production grew enormously over the 19th century, the maintenance of fundamentally traditional methods of production was one of the reasons that beer and tequila could be promoted as modern in contrast to pulque, which was criticised for being old-fashioned and unsophisticated.

There is now a growing movement to support and celebrate these traditions and the local, small-scale producers who uphold them. Annual pulque festivals, both in rural and urban locations, are becoming more common with the support of cultural and culinary organisations. For instance, Slow Food Puebla Gastronómica and the Regional Unit of Popular Cultures of the State of Puebla have sponsored an annual pulque fair since 2012, where local tlachiqueros hold workshops demonstrating different processes in the production of pulque.

Maintaining traditional methods of production, involving slow growth of the agave and collection of the aguamiel, with rapid fermentation and distribution of the pulque, are also important for how consumers experience the drink as authentic:

“I see pulque being part of the Slow Food... Good pulque needs to be drunk fresh. It takes ten, twelve, fifteen years to grow the plant, somebody needs to cut it, ferment it and serve it fresh. If you don’t drink pulque in Mexico fresh from the producer, well, that’s what makes it special.”

Edson Díaz Fuentes, Chef/writer. Interview, 2015.

Eating and Drinking with Pulque

The flavour profile of aguamiel – from which pulque is fermented – has deep herbal notes with a smoky aftertaste. It is sweet and wooden like. The colour is usually a transparent light amber with a light consistency, similar to that of freshly pressed sugarcane juice. After 3 to 5 hours of fermentation the substance is no longer aguamiel; the pulque has turned pale white and become denser, resembling watered milk. A subtle tangy and slightly acidic smell can be perceived and the taste is semi sweet with a light creamy texture. Even after 10 hours of fermentation pulque is still considered fresh. The longer pulque is fermented it will become thicker, lose clearness and the smell will be intense.

The average alcohol content is from 3-7 degrees, and it is quite rich in proteins, carbohydrates and vitamins. For this reason, pulque was an essential part of the daily diet for ordinary Mexicans – and still is in some rural parts – much like beer was in early modern England.

Curados de Pulque (Cured Pulque)

It has been common practice to add various substances, including roots, herbs and spices to pulque, since Aztec times, often as a means of stimulating fermentation and giving the drink greater potency. In the colonial period, Spanish officials tried to prohibit this practice as unhealthy and increasing the likelihood of drunken disorder. Despite this, curing pulque by adding fruits and other flavourings became very common in colonial-era pulquerías since this was a way for retailers to make the most of pulque that was losing its freshness. In modern pulquerías, curados remain popular.



Curados distintos [Various curados] Xochimilco, Mexico.

Photograph by David Puma, 2013. [<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/legalcode>]

Some of the oldest recipes to describe making curados appear in the 1845 book *The New Mexican Cook: A Dictionary*:

- Guava: Take only the peel of the guavas, grind them and mix the puree with the pulque and add sugar and cinnamon, let ferment for 3 to 4 hours, pass through a muslin and serve.
- Egg: Beat and add as many egg yolks as desired, add sugar.
- Pineapple: Chop and grind the pulp and peel of the pineapple, pass through a muslin and incorporate to the pulque. Add sugar.
- Tuna roja (prickly pear): Grind the peeled prickly pears, add guava, mix and pass through a muslin. Add sugar.
- Almond: Peel and grind almonds, incorporate the paste to the pulque, add sugar.
- Orange blossom: Add orange blossom essence to taste, add sugar.
- Orange: Add orange zest and freshly squeezed juice of the same oranges to the pulque, add sugar.
- Peanut: Soak raw (just peeled and dried) peanuts, grind and incorporate the paste to the pulque, sweeten. Roasted peanuts can be used too.

Pulque Recipes

As an ingredient, pulque has 3 main functions: to serve as a base in adobos, which are thick spicy sauce-stews; as a leavening agent to make special breads that are sold during religious festivities; and as an emulsifier and stabilizer in traditional Mexican meringues.

Adobo de Conejo (Rabbit adobo-stew)

Ingredients:

- 1 big rabbit (or 400g rabbit legs)
- 1 big onion chopped in 4
- 1 lt of pulque
- 1 cup of water
- 4 big garlic cloves
- 100g ancho chillies (must use dried chillies)
- 3 chipotle chillies (must use dried chillies)
- 3 big ripe tomatoes boiled
- Cooking oil
- Salt
- 1tsp ground cumin
- 3 tbsp apple vinegar
- 2 toasted avocado leaves

Method:

1. In a big pot, boil the rabbit in the pulque and water with the onion and the garlic cloves.
2. Boil the tomatoes for 5-7 minutes.
3. In the meantime, lightly roast and soak the chillies. After 40 minutes, open and seed them.
4. When the rabbit is cooked, remove the onion and garlic, transfer to a blender, add the chillies, and tomatoes, blend until all the ingredients are totally incorporated.
5. In a heated saucepan, pour 4 tbsp of cooking oil, sift the liquefied chillies and cook on a high heat for 4 minutes stirring constantly.
6. Slowly start incorporating the pulque broth into the pot, add the cumin, vinegar and the avocado leaves. Cook for about 20 minutes on a medium-low heat until it thickens.
7. Add the rabbit, season with salt and cook for another 10 minutes.
8. Serve hot with white steamed rice.

Pulque Meringues

In the city of Puebla it is still very common to come across meringue hawkers. The “merengueros” carry a small wooden tray carefully covered with a transparent plastic sheet protecting a delicate arrangement of three types of meringues traditionally made with pulque.

- Gaznate, slightly similar to Italian cannelloni, has a thin and crisp deep fried crust in the shape of a tube (about the size of a hair curler) filled with fresh white meringue.
- Merengue is a round meringue made with two piped and slow baked halves with a fresh, chewy centre, coloured in a soft shade of pink.

- Carlota is a fresh white meringue wrapped with a soft yellow pancake made with a thick egg, flour and sugar batter.

Usually 2-4 tablespoons of pulque are mixed into the meringue batter working as a preservative and emulsifier to keep the meringues fresh.



Pulque meringues, Puebla, Mexico.

Photograph by Rocio Carvajal, 2015.



Meringues stall, Puebla, Mexico.

Photograph by Rocio Carvajal, 2015.

Pan de pulque (Pulque Bread)

“Pulque Bread” is popular in the states of Puebla and Tlaxcala.

Ingredients (makes 2 big loaves):

- 700ml of freshly fermented or “young” pulque
- 1 kg of white wheat flour
- 500g shortening
- 500g ground molasses
- 250g caster sugar

Method:

1. Sift the flour into a big bowl, add the sugar, molasses, pulque and shortening, mix until the ingredients come together into a soft rich dough.
2. Cover and prove until it doubles in size (About 1.5 hours).
3. Knock down the dough and divide into 12 portions, shape each portion into a tight ball and press gently to flatten it slightly.
4. Transfer to a greased baking sheet, cover and prove for another 30 minutes.
5. Preheat the oven at 350C.
6. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until ready.

NB. If using slightly more fermented or “older” pulque, a greater quantity (up to 1 lt) will be needed to moisten the dough, since it will be thicker and more dense.

Pulque bread buns, Puebla, Mexico.

Photograph by Rocio Carvajal, 2015.



Pulque bread ingredients, Puebla, Mexico.

Photograph by Rocio Carvajal, 2015.



Pulque bread dough, Puebla, Mexico.

Photograph by Rocio Carvajal, 2015.



Pulquerías

Pulquerías, or pulque bars, first opened in 16th century Mexico when Spanish colonisation began and the pulque trade became a major source of tax revenue for the colonial authorities. A lot of pulque continued to be sold informally in rural locations and illegally (untaxed or unlicensed) in towns, but these commercial taverns became crucial locations for urban social life for several centuries. Although they are now much less common than they were a hundred years ago, pulquerías are enjoying something of a renaissance in Puebla and the state of Tlaxcala as new generations seek to preserve and recover this aspect of Mexico's cultural heritage.

Social Life and Strife in Mexico City

Pulquerías had a central role in the hustle and bustle of city life from the 1500s through to the mid 20th century. Before Spanish colonisation, there were no such commercial taverns and there were strict regulations over how much pulque could be consumed, by whom, when and for what purpose, primarily because pulque had a special significance for indigenous religious beliefs and practices. With the creation of pulquerías and a commercial pulque trade, it became much more widely consumed and its social importance outstripped its religious meanings. When pulquerías were first established, they were supposed to be for indigenous people only, but their customer base soon became as ethnically and socially mixed as Mexico's population itself.

Pulquerías ranged from colourfully decorated and named bars to quite basic, even mobile, stalls with limited facilities. Since pulque became a key part of the everyday diet, people visited pulquerías for refreshment throughout the day, with a typical pulquería opening from 6am to 6 or 7pm. Of course, pulquerías were important places for socialising within a particular neighbourhood. But they were also key hubs where information was shared – when newspapers emerged in the early 1800s,



Dependientes de una pulquería, retrato de grupo [Employees of a pulquería, group portrait], Archivo Casasola, Fototeca Nacional, Mexico City, 1915.

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for instance, they would often be read aloud and discussed in pulquerías – and where informal business exchanges or work negotiations could be carried out. There were around 1,000 pulquerías in Mexico City by the early 1900s and they played a central role in the everyday life of working people.

Like pulque itself, however, pulquerías were often viewed negatively and with suspicion by political authorities and wealthier sectors of society, as places that caused social problems. In 1692 after serious popular protests in Mexico City, pulquerías were temporarily banned because the city authorities believed they were hotbeds of conspiracy and dissent amongst the ‘lower orders’ of society. Regulations in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries repeatedly stipulated that pulquerías should not have seats or benches, sell food, or have music, dancing or games, to discourage people from gathering and staying there, since it was feared this would lead to drunkenness, crime and disorder. Although such concerns were not without foundation – pubs and bars everywhere give rise to such issues – a certain amount of snobbishness towards typical pulque drinkers inflated them. We can see this in city council documents from 1907 that recommended that pulquerías be prohibited from certain neighbourhoods within Mexico City:

“because these areas are inhabited almost exclusively by the *civilized classes* of Mexican society and foreign families; the elegance of the buildings, both existing and under construction, make these neighbourhoods unsuitable for *this class of tavern*, which are generally frequented by the *worst kind of people*, with their vice-ridden customs and their lack of cleanliness. Pulquerías are *unbecoming* for such neighbourhoods.”

“Proposal to reform Article 12 of the Pulquería Regulations of 18 December 1901”, 1907.

The rise of the beer industry and the growing popularity of bars called cantinas contributed to the decline of pulquerías in the city. But this kind of stigmatisation of pulque, as a drink of the poor and unruly, also contributed to this process and is lamented by those who continue to manage pulquerías in Mexico City:

“It’s a real shame – and not because I have a stake in the matter – that an authentic national product like this is disappearing. And the saddest part is how they’ve disparaged it. It’s sad and it’s what hurts us most. Meanwhile, wine, beer and other types of drinks are flying sky high. There are very few pulquerías nowadays, even though I believe it’s a product that’s really less harmful than the others.”

Leopoldo López García, Owner of La Antigua Roma pulquería, in “The Power of Pulque,” 2010.



Pulquería los insurgentes, Mexico City.

Photograph by Omar Bárcena, 2010.
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Pulquerías in Mexican Art and Literature

Although pulquerías got – or were given – a bad reputation, they were also sometimes depicted in a more positive way, as typically or authentically Mexican places. In the 19th century, a genre of writing and art known as *costumbrismo* was very common in Mexico. These types of works included descriptions of daily life, local customs and everyday cultural practices to create an image of what it meant to be an ordinary Mexican, although it is important to bear in mind that these descriptions were generally romanticised or idealised, rather than realistic.



José Agustín Arrieta, *Interior de una pulquería*, 1850, oil on canvas, Museo Nacional de Historia, Mexico City. Courtesy of CONACULTA-INAH-MEX.

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José Agustín Arrieta was one of the most famous *costumbrista* artists of the time, depicting a series of scenes from daily life in the city and state of Puebla, including this “Interior of a Pulquería”. He shows a cross-section of Mexican society coming together in the pulquería, including people of different social classes, ethnic backgrounds and occupations, as well as giving a distinct regional flavour of Puebla through the dress of the serving woman, in the style known as *china poblana*. Like many real pulquerías, Arrieta’s one would have broken several regulations, as pulquerías were not supposed to serve food, have seats or allow gatherings of more than three people. As well as the animal skins containing pulque, the background includes a painting hanging on the wall. This painting is *The Triumph of Bacchus* (1628-9) by the Golden Age Spanish painter Diego Velázquez, which shows the Roman god Bacchus giving his gift of wine to ordinary men to provide relief from their daily struggles. This highlights Mexico’s Spanish heritage as well as suggesting that pulque is to Mexican culture, what wine was to Ancient Rome’s.

Manuel Payno and Guillermo Prieto – two literary giants of the 19th century who wrote in the *costumbrista* style – also depicted pulquerías as emblems of Mexico’s popular culture, its diverse population and its ancient indigenous heritage, although at the same time noting the potential of pulquerías to cause problems. Very common in these depictions are references to Xóchitl, a woman from Aztec history and mythology reputedly involved in the discovery of pulque.

“The pulquerías are another temptation, and dangerous because of the fights that occur. Painted in the centre of the wall is a strong young woman, with round, rosy cheeks, a feathered headdress and a light dress peppered with coloured jewels: she presides over the pulquería and seems to encourage the locals to leave on display their bulky chests, their thick calves and their small, sandalled feet. She is America personified and should be recognised as the queen of these singular taverns where the liquor discovered by the beautiful Xóchitl is dispensed.”

Manuel Payno, *Los bandidos de Río Frío* [The Cold River Bandits] (1888-91)

“the typical way of getting to know the common population of Mexico City, a population peppered with friars and soldiers, matadors, libertines, and carefree youths of the rich class, was going to the pulquerías located in the suburbs... Men, women, children, abattoir workers, matadors; blankets, capes, camel-hair coats and jackets, intermingling to form a restless throng, in which shouts, insults, shamelessness, guffaws and blasphemy flow freely, the fervour being fed by tasters, glasses and pitchers of Xóchitl’s intoxicating liquor.”

Guillermo Prieto, *Los memorias de mis tiempos* [Memories of my Times] (1886)

In another extract from his mammoth novel, *Los bandidos de Río Frío*, Payno associated pulquerías with Nezahualcoyotl, another figure from Mexico’s pre-conquest indigenous heritage who was celebrated for his contributions to philosophy and poetry. He also talks about charros visiting the pulquería: this is the name given to traditional Mexican cowboys of central-western Mexico. Charro imagery features strongly in tequila marketing nowadays, but these examples show that pulque was once represented as traditionally and authentically Mexican in the way that tequila is now.



“they built a large pulquería from its very foundations up; with the images of Xóchitl and Nezahualcoyotl painted in strong colours on the white façade, it was very striking... One day two well-dressed *charros* arrived on their excellent horses and dismounted before the pulquería. They asked for lunch and, although it was not a restaurant, in the spirit of good will the owner arranged for his wife to make them something to eat; he was accustomed to pleasing all his customers in order to promote the famous pulquería of Xóchitl, which sold the finest pulques from the plains of Apan.”

Manuel Payno, *Los bandidos de Río Frío* (1888-91)

Hombre sentado afuera de una pulquería, retrato [Man sitting outside a pulquería, portrait] Archivo Casasola, Fototeca Nacional, Mexico City, 1920.
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The Origins of Pulque

Exactly when pulque started being produced in central Mexico is not known, but archaeologists think that it may have been around 200AD by the people of Teotihuacan, who built Mexico's largest pyramids.



Pyramid of the Moon and Pyramid of the Sun, Teotihuacan, Mexico.

Photograph by Deborah Toner, 2008.

Several different stories of pulque's origins have circulated over time, showing how pulque is involved in complex and changing relationships between myth, history, memory, heritage, politics and cultural identity. Most of these stories involve Xóchitl, who often featured in 19th century art and literature, or Mayahuel, an Aztec goddess associated with the agave plant.

One story fixes the discovery of pulque in time to the period in which the Toltec people ruled over central Mexico, from about 850AD to 1050AD. This story was recorded by a Mexican historian in the 17th century and attributed to Aztec mythology. A noble maiden named Xóchitl presented the Toltec king with a gift of pulque, which her father had made from the agave plants he cultivated. The king was so taken with both the gift of pulque and the beauty of Xóchitl that he took the young maiden as his queen without her parents' knowledge. This led to a scandal, which was resolved when the king agreed to name Xóchitl's son as his heir to the Toltec throne. But the new political dynasty was doomed and the Toltecs lost power. The Aztecs liked to depict themselves as the natural candidates to take over rulership of central Mexico in the vacuum of power left by the Toltecs; this origin story suggests that pulque paved the way for the Aztecs to take over.

Other sources attributed pulque's origins to divine rather than human intervention, helping to locate pulque in the cycles of time that characterised pre-conquest indigenous thinking about history. In one account, the first maguey plant – from which pulque is produced – grew from the bones of a goddess Mayahuel. In another version, the gods transformed Mayahuel, a woman with 400 breasts, into the first maguey plant, so that her nutritive powers could go towards the production of pulque instead of milk. In turn, pulque consumption created the *centzontotochtin*: the 400 rabbit gods who were linked to fertility, renewal and the moon in Aztec beliefs, but also highlighted the

many different, often unpredictable, effects that drinking pulque had on people. These beliefs were reflected in the ceremonies where pulque was consumed or presented as an offering to gods: many vessels for holding pulque were shaped like rabbits.

The Florentine Codex, one of our most important sources for understanding early Mexican history, claimed that the discovery of pulque took place in the early years of Aztec rule and had significant political consequences. At the first feast held in celebration of the discovery, one invited noble disgraced himself by getting drunk – he had 5 cups of pulque, but only 4 were allowed – and his people ended up in exile. The Aztecs had very strict rules about who could consume pulque, how much, when and for what purpose, so it's clear that this origin story was intended to reinforce people's obedience to those rules.

So, although there are many different narratives about the origins of pulque, they all make clear that having a historical or cultural connection to the *origins* of pulque carried value, as a statement of political legitimacy, as an acknowledgement of the gods' good will, or as a means of locating contemporary cultural practice in time immemorial.



The celebrated 1869 painting by Mexican artist José María Obregón, *The Discovery of Pulque*, retold the Aztec story about pulque's origins, showing Xóchitl presenting the bowl of pulque to the Toltec king.

José María Obregón, *El descubrimiento del pulque*, 1869, Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City. [Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons].



Aztec pulque vessels, Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City.

Photograph by Deborah Toner, 2013.

Pulque, Family and Cultural Heritage

Co-author of this chapter, Rocio Carvajal, explains how she came to know pulque

On my father's maternal line, my family came from a long line of indigenous rural nobility from the State of Tlaxcala, who maintained their lands and status by siding with the Spanish conquerors, as many others did. The family's ethnic heritage was diversified by various marriages and the adoption of a French orphan, but along the way the hacienda – an estate with buildings and land – was lost and the family migrated to the city of Puebla.

My great-grandmother was raised at the family's hacienda “El Espiritu Santo” in Tlaxcala, where corn, wheat and pulque were produced. She was taught to sing, sew, knit, draw, play the piano, cook and bake. During her entire adult life and until her death (she lived well into her late 80s) she used to drink one glass of pulque a day, and took special pride in it, arguing that it kept her strong and healthy. By contrast, her only daughter, my grandmother, had a very negative opinion about the “Indian's drink” and never drank pulque, but preferred brandy, sherry, beer and anise liqueurs.

For most of his adult life, my father wasn't interested at all in ethnic food or drinks. It wasn't until a few decades ago when he began working on ecotourism projects with indigenous communities that for the first time he had direct contact with authentic indigenous foods and became deeply interested in the production of pulque. We have made numerous visits to pulque-producing haciendas in the states of Puebla and Tlaxcala and participated many times in the extraction of aguamiel, the sap of the agave, and taken it with the tlachiqueros to the tinacales to be fermented.

I remember being between 8 and 9 years old the first time I had a sip of freshly extracted agave sap, served on a dry corn leaf. But it wasn't until I was 26 years old, living in Mexico City, I went to a real pulquería for the first time and tried several curados: pulque mixed with fruit pulps, oatmeal

and pecan. The unusual tangy-sour taste of pulque becomes more palatable with these sweet blends, especially good for first-time drinkers.

Although I don't personally drink much pulque, I cook and bake with it regularly. For me, pulque means a way to connect with my family history, to share a common interest with my father and to explore our cultural heritage. It has allowed me opportunities to experiment with and re-interpret traditional recipes. I celebrate the fact that Mexican gastronomy has helped build bridges to the past, present, future and even transcultural conversations.

Final Thoughts

Pulque, like all traditional foods and drinks, has a cultural relevance beyond its production and consumption. The social dynamics generated by the production and consumption of such foods and drinks can put us in touch with our histories – our personal and family histories, our community or regional histories, even our national or ethnic histories.

“From my experience, I just think that if you can go to Oaxaca City or Oaxaca State and pulque is available, just give it a try. It is refreshing, it is delicious, it is unique. It is unique in the sense of both flavour and history, and I don't know for how long it will be available... At some point, it will be our responsibility and that's why I encourage people to try it, because the more people ask for pulque, the more people try pulque, it will preserve better and we will be able to keep it.”

Edson Díaz Fuentes, Chef/writer, Interview, 2015.

There is a sense then that pulque needs to be preserved as a product because of its place in Mexican history and heritage and restored from a position of relative obscurity in terms of consumption. What role does the idea of authenticity play in this?



Pulque stand, Feria del Pulque, Ozolco, Mexico.

Photograph by Rocio Carvajal, 2015.

The status of pulque as an authentic drink has changed over time, and so has the nature of that “authenticity”. In pre-colonial Mexico, pulque was clearly highly prized as a sacred foodstuff and control over who got to drink it and when was very political. In the colonial period, as pulque became more widely accessible, it was a quintessential part of everyday life, but it also started to be looked down upon as the “Indian” drink, a drink of the poor and unsophisticated. As Mexico became an independent nation in the 19th century and its leaders were looking for ways to define what it meant to be Mexican, this dual view became more pronounced. For some, pulque was *authentically Mexican* because it was the stuff of everyday life, it reflected long-standing traditions and it could symbolise that Mexico had an illustrious ancient past. But for others, pulque’s traditional and indigenous status meant that it shouldn’t be part of “modern” Mexican culture. The growing popularity of other drinks that could combine an image of being modern with an image of being authentically Mexican – like tequila – contributed to pulque’s long decline in the 20th century.

Now, the traditional nature of pulque is more positively valued. This is partly because of a more widespread celebration of Mexico’s culinary heritage that has developed in recent years. Indigenous ingredients, recipes and techniques are fundamental to this culinary heritage, as is their intermingling with Spanish and other influences in the formation of a unique mestizo cuisine. Or rather, of multiple distinct regional mestizo cuisines. For pulque’s resistance to mass industrialised production and export also tie it uniquely to the locale of central Mexico: the experience of tasting pulque is in many ways inseparable from the experience of visiting Puebla, Tlaxcala, Hidalgo, Oaxaca and Mexico itself. The changes in what pulque has symbolised and in how people consume pulque that we see across the course of Mexican history help us to understand how powerful the idea of authenticity can be.

Glossary

- Acocote – hollowed out and dried gourd shell, with holes at both ends, used in the collection of aguamiel from the agave plant.
- Adobo – a thick sauce or stew, common in Mexican cuisine.
- Agave – a type of plant, mainly native to Mexico, with more than 200 different species. Pulque is produced from 4 specific species of agave (also known as maguey): manso, cenizo, ayoteco and cimarrón.
- Aguamiel – the sap drawn from the heart of the agave plant, from which pulque is fermented.
- Aztec – most commonly used to describe the Aztec empire, which comprised most of central and southern Mexico in the 15th and early 16th century. Also refers to the people who ruled the Aztec empire, the Mexica, based in their city of Tenochtitlan where modern day Mexico City now stands.
- Bacchus – Roman god of wine and agricultural fertility, like the Greek god Dionysus.
- Cantina – a bar serving a variety of alcoholic drinks (mostly beers and spirits) as well as food.
- Centzontotochtin – four hundred rabbit gods. The gods of pulque, linked to fertility and the moon. The four hundred is symbolic of “a very large number” and refers to the multiple different behavioural effects of intoxication by pulque.
- China poblana – traditional style of dress for women, particularly linked to Puebla.
- Charro – a traditional Mexican horseman, or cowboy, originally linked to the history of the plains in central Mexico, but increasingly associated with the Jalisco countryside in western Mexico.
- Cholula – city and district in the state of Puebla. Also the site and name of a very old, large and important pre-colonial indigenous city-state.
- Colonial period – Mexico was a colonial territory within the Spanish empire from 1521 to 1810. It was known as the colony of New Spain.
- Costumbrismo – a genre or mode of literature and art, common in 19th-century Mexico, that depicted local customs and everyday cultural practices of Mexican people, often in an idealised or stereotypical manner.
- Curados de pulque – cured pulque. Pulque flavoured with various fruits, nuts, sugar and other flavourings.
- Florentine Codex – very detailed manuscript about pre-colonial indigenous society, politics and culture, produced in the 16th century by a Spanish friar and numerous indigenous contributors.
- Hacienda – large agricultural estate for the production of numerous crops and livestock. Agaves were usually cultivated on the less fertile or more remote soils within haciendas.
- Hidalgo – state in eastern-central Mexico, named after Miguel Hidalgo, one of the leaders of the Mexican War of Independence (1810-21). Region where the Toltecs established dominance from c. 9th to 11th century AD.
- Jícara – bowl made from a dried gourd shell, used for the consumption of pulque and other beverages like chocolate in rural areas.
- Maguey – alternative name for particular types of agave.
- Mayahuel – goddess within Aztec religious belief, associated with the maguey plant, fertility, the moon and pulque.
- Mestizo – mixed, can refer to both people of mixed heritage, or cultural practices of mixed heritage.
- Mezcal – liquor distilled from agave plants, often with distinctive smoky flavour imparted through the baking of the agave hearts before distillation.
- Nahuatl – Indigenous language spoken in central Mexico.
- Neutli – Nahuatl word for aguamiel.
- Nezahualcoyotl – a king of Texcoco, a city within the Aztec empire, renowned for his poetry and philosophical writings.
- Oaxaca – both a city and state in southern Mexico, particularly famed for its cuisine.

Ocaxtle – a scraper, sharp metallic spoon-like tool used in the collection of aguamiel from the agave plant.

Octli – Nahuatl word for pulque.

Plains of Apam/Apan – plains region in the Valley of Mexico, including parts of the states of Mexico, Puebla, Hidalgo and Tlaxcala. Much agave cultivation was concentrated here and often identified as the source of the finest pulque production.

Polihuhqui – Nahuatl term referring to rapid decomposition of the octli beverage, adopted by the Spanish in early colonial period as “pulque” to describe the drink itself.

Puebla – city and state in the highlands of south-central Mexico. Poblano is the adjective of Puebla: china poblana is a regional style of dress; mole poblano is a regional culinary speciality.

Pulque blanco or pulque puro – white or pure pulque. Pulque without any additives or flavourings. For much of the colonial period, only pulque blanco was legal.

Pulquería – pulque-selling bar.

Spanish conquest and colonisation – began in 1519, when Spanish conquistadors made alliances with various indigenous societies in order to overthrow Aztec rule over central Mexico.

Tajadera – double edged and curved knife, with a wooden handle, used in the collection of aguamiel from the agave plant.

Teotihuacan – a pre-colonial city and society in central Mexico, very powerful between roughly the 1st and 7th centuries AD. Archaeological site with the biggest ancient pyramids in Mexico.

Tequila – liquor distilled from agave plants or a type of mezcal produced in 5 states of western Mexico.

Tequila is a town in the state of Jalisco; so the drink was originally called “mezcal from Tequila”.

Tequila acquired denomination of origin status in 1974, so that only mezcal produced using the blue agave, in the state of Jalisco and in parts of the states of Michoacan, Nayarit, Guanajuato and Tamaulipas, can be called tequila.

Tinacal – a cool, dry room with multiple containers for the fermentation of pulque.

Tlachiquero – person responsible for extracting the aguamiel from the agave ahead of pulque production.

Tlaxcala – city and state in eastern-central Mexico, named for the pre-colonial indigenous state of Tlaxcala, who were the most important allies of the Spanish in the war against the Aztec empire.

Toltec – a pre-colonial society powerful in east-central Mexico between roughly 9th and 11th centuries AD.

Toluca – state capital of the state of Mexico.

Transvolcanic belt – also known as the Sierra Nevada, a volcanic mountain range stretching across central and central-southern Mexico.

Xóchitl – woman from pre-colonial history and mythology, often accredited with the discovery of pulque.



Flaounes: Celebration Easter pies from Cyprus

What are flaounes?

Ever since I remember myself, every Good Friday, before the crack of dawn all the girls and women of the family would gather at my grandmother's house to knead the dough and make huge amounts of flaounes. In fact the preparation would start weeks before, sourcing the best of ingredients (speciality cheese, home-farmed eggs, home-grown mint etc.), and culminating in the ceremonious grating of 12-20 kilos of cheese the day before, which would involve the whole family.

Flaounes (in plural, and *flaouna* in singular) are festive Easter-time cheese pies and are an iconic, exclusively Cypriot product. Grated cheese is kneaded with eggs, leavening, spices, mint and raisins and left overnight to ferment. This mixture is then folded into thinly rolled-out disks of dough, leaving the top of the pie uncovered. Beaten eggs and sesame are added on top and the square or triangular pies are baked, until golden brown.



Collaborative preparation of flaounes



Flaounes straight from the oven

‘Every Greek Cypriote family, as poor as it may be, considers it a holy duty to make flaunes for Easter’, reports the historian Kyriakos Hadjioannou in the 1970s. Planning for, preparing and consuming flaounes is the highlight of the Easter festivities for my and many other Greek Cypriot families.

Flaounes are traditionally produced on Easter eve (or earlier) and consumed on Easter day, right after the midnight mass, to break the 50-day long fast for Lent, when Orthodox Christians are required to abstain from meat and dairy products. They are made using a speciality hard Cypriot cheese, called ‘flaouna cheese’, which farmers produce only once a year, the weeks before Easter. Flaounes are also produced by the other religious communities of Cyprus: Turkish Cypriots, Armenians, Maronites and Latins. Turkish Cypriots traditionally make flaounes during Ramadhan and eat them at the break of fasting. This labour-intensive treat is often prepared by a group of female family members and may be offered to guests and exchanged with other families. It is thus a testament of the culinary competence of each homemaker and family.



Various brands and sub-types of flaouna cheese, as they are sold in a supermarket in Nicosia, the week before Easter

But what makes this uniquely Cypriot pastry authentic? In what follows I present the views, attitudes and memories of Greek Cypriots, residing in Cyprus and in the diaspora in the UK, as I have collected them from casual conversations, group discussions, observations and written accounts, as well as my own experiences. I try to untangle the elements that make this much-loved and widely consumed pastry authentic. I explore regional variation in the ingredients and methods of making flaounes, the origin of various family recipes, as well as the history and politics of this custom. A collection of the best, ‘authentic’ recipes on how to make this delicious treat is also included.

(Regional) Variation

Sweet or savoury

The oldest version of flaounes, as remembered by older Cypriots and also reported in accounts collected by Evgenia Petrou in the 1980s (in her study entitled *Récits de vie et de gastronomie à Chypre* / ‘Accounts of the Cypriot life and gastronomy’) is made of fewer and more modest ingredients and is similar to a bread. The cheese filling would be savoury, made solely of cheese, eggs and mint (and optionally large raisins) and the dough would be the same as bread dough.

Nowadays the flaouna dough has changed from bread-type to a sweeter, richer pastry dough, with the addition of eggs, butter, sugar, and sometimes yogurt (to make it crispier) or even orange juice. Older participants would regard this as a more ‘modern’ version of the dough, and it has been widely produced in Cyprus in the past four decades or so.

There is considerable variation in the filling of flaounes, as well. The cheese filling can be savoury, or sweet with the use of milder cheeses (e.g. unsalted flaouna cheese) and the addition of sugar and raisins. A number of Cypriot hard sheep/goat cheeses are used to make the special filling, called *fokos* (or *foukos*, in Paphos). Flaouna cheese can be salty and mature (especially the variety produced in Paphos), or milder and almost unsalted. In addition, halloumi cheese may be used in savoury flaounes, as well as kefalotyri cheese. In fact, participants in Limassol and Kyrenia reported making flaounes exclusively of kefalotyri cheese. *Anari* (a soft, white Cypriot cheese, made of goat or sheep milk, similar to ricotta) and cheddar-type cheeses are more recent additions and are not considered ‘proper cheeses’ for the *fokos*.

In Western Cyprus, in the regions of Paphos and Limassol savoury flaounes are the commonest: saltier cheeses are used (mature flaouna cheese, and possibly kefalotyri and halloumi) and sugar is not added in the cheese filling (and sometimes sugar is also not added in the dough). The same can be said about Northern Cyprus and especially the Karpasia peninsula. In the Eastern regions of Larnaca and Famagousta sweet flaounes with milder cheeses are often encountered. In Famagousta abundant raisins are added and in Larnaca sugar is also included in the cheese filling. In the capital, Nicosia, both sweet and savoury flaounes are common.

Spices

Mint is the characteristic herb of flaounes. It is added fresh, but in some variations dry mint may also be used in the cheese filling. Other characteristic spices of flaounes (that are added both to the dough and the cheese filling) are ground **mastic**, the resin from the mastic tree, and **mehlepi** (*mablepi* in Standard Modern Greek and *mahleb* in arabic). Mehlepi is made from the stone of the St Lucie cherry.

A variation found traditionally in Western Cyprus (Paphos and Limassol regions) is the addition of **kannaouri**, i.e. seeds from the cannabis plant. Although the cultivation of the plant is illegal (as the leaves can be used as narcotics) the actual seed is commercially available legally. The seed is toasted and added to the cheese filling, giving flaounes a crunchy



Flaouna made with halloumi cheese, only, without raisins, produced in Nicosia, by a 58 year-old, Greek-Cypriot man, in 2015



Fresh mint, a basic ingredient of flaounes

texture. A top commentator (middle-aged, female, from Limassol) in a leading Cypriot news site posted on May 27th, 2012, in the comments section of a news story on cannabis plantation that ‘I always put *kannaouri* in my flaounes... I can’t fathom flaounes without *kannaouri*... and I buy it from shops with organic products!’. Flaounes with *kannaouri* are sold in some bakeries.

Cinnamon is not the most common spice for flaounes, but is used in the cheese filling (and dough) in some areas, including villages in North and East Cyprus and mountainous regions, e.g. Ardana, Paralimni and Fterikoudi.

Saffron may be also added in the cheese filling in some villages in the mountain of Troodos for taste and to give a deep yellow colour (e.g. Sykopetra and Fterikoudi).

Although **vanilla** is not an ingredient of traditional Cypriot cuisine, it may be added to both home-made and commercially available flaounes (especially mini ones). The use of vanilla in the cheese filling possibly originates from a recipe included in a 1978 recipe book by the Cypriot chef Marios Mourtzis, entitled ‘Η μαγειρική στην Κύπρο’ (*Cooking in Cyprus*).

Aniseed may be added on top of the flaounes, especially by Greek Cypriots originally from North Cyprus (which is now under Turkish rule) and also by Turkish Cypriots. Aniseed mixed with sesame is a common topping for Cypriot breads.

‘Many villages use aniseed mixed with the sesame to give a different flavour to the pastry’

(female, 38, London, written account)

Paskies

Paskies are a special type of flaounes, found exclusively in West Cyprus, in the region of Paphos. They have the same dough and cheese filling as flaounes. The difference is that pieces of fried lamb (or less commonly goat or rabbit), occasionally with tomato, are added to the cheese filling. The shape of *paskies* is round, and the top is either left uncovered, like flaounes, or the filling is fully covered between two disks of dough. In fact, Paphos is the only area where flaounes (without meat) are also made in a round (‘flower’) shape.

In recent years, and especially after the dramatic geodemographic changes that ensued after the summer of 1974, regional variation in flaounes has been in retreat, and the various recipes and ingredients can now be found throughout Cyprus and the Cypriot diaspora. *Paskies* constitute an exception to this trend, as they still retain their strong local association with Paphos.



Round or ‘flower-shaped’ flaounes.

What makes flaounes ‘authentic’?

Association with tradition and imaginary past

Authenticity in flaounes is often associated with years-old tradition. The closer flaounes emulate traditional ingredients, methods, spaces of preparation and consumption, shape and appearance, the more authentic they are deemed to be.

[Authentic flaounes are] ‘Produced at home, with traditional ingredients and traditional recipe.’

(female, 29, Nicosia, written account)

The ingredients, especially the cheese used, are paramount in determining the authenticity of flaounes. For example, in the past fifteen years, flaounes with the lighter Cypriot cheese, anari, are produced alongside flaounes with flaouna cheese. This newest, sweet variant of flaounes, which is widely commercially available, is viewed as non-authentic.

Some informants (up to 70 years old) would differentiate between ‘authentic’ and ‘even more authentic’ flaounes. The most authentic flaounes are the ones associated with an often imagined pre-modern, rural life, i.e. baked in a wood oven and made in the village.

However, the oldest participants (in their 70s and 80s) –who have actually experienced this pre-technological life the longest– do not view older ways of making flaounes as ‘more authentic’, just more difficult. They report that Cypriots in the olden days had limited access to quality ingredients (for example butter) and that would affect the recipe, if indeed the family had the means to even attempt to make flaounes. Traditional flaounes would taste more like bread with a cheese-filling, rather than a richer (sweet) pastry, as they are today.

‘In the old times they were not fully fully [flaounes]. [...] We did not have the ingredients we have now’

(female, 80, Nicosia, oral account)

Place

Flaounes invoke local places that play a crucial role in determining authenticity. Production at home is a recurrent criterion for authenticity. Participants of all ages (29 to 86 year olds) agree that authentic flaounes are not mass produced in commercial establishments, but are prepared at home. Flaounes produced abroad, for example in the UK, are not seen as any less authentic, as long as the home producers (expectably women of Cypriot origin) follow the traditional recipe. In fact, participants residing both in Cyprus and in the UK emphasise that often diasporic populations adhere more closely to traditions than Cyprus-residing producers and consumers of flaounes.

Even though ‘authentic’ flaounes are the ones made at home, flaounes are also readily available in all bakeries in Cyprus and also Cypriot/Greek/Turkish bakeries abroad. During Easter time consumers can purchase from all bakeries in Cyprus sweet and savoury flaounes, with or without raisins, and also the more modern and lighter version with anari cheese. In the bakeries in the UK flaounes made (in part) with British cheeses, especially cheddar, are also on sale. In addition to registered establishments, a number of Cypriot women sell flaounes that they bake at home, to supplement their family’s income, leading to a recent crackdown of unregistered flaouna vendors by the governmental food safety agency (March/April 2015). Also, bakeries and other food outlets sell mini (cocktail) flaounes.

Mini, 'cocktail' flaounes with cheddar cheese and anari cheese, sold in a Greek/Cypriot bakery in North London, throughout the year.



Commercially produced flaounes do not necessarily lack authenticity. Cypriots believe that some bakeries and small-scale unregistered home bakers that use 'proper'/traditional ingredients at proper dosage make 'authentic' flaounes. Ultimately the taste would determine if the commercially produced ones are 'authentic' or just a cheaper replica of the real pie.

The family's way

Flaounes bring about associations of family time, and trigger a variety of anecdotes of funny or frustrating attempts at preparing and consuming the pies. It is then unsurprising that the authenticity of flaounes is ultimately measured against family customs, traditions, and memories.

'There are different types of flaounes with different ways of preparation. There are savoury, sweet, from Paphos, 'paskies'. All these are authentic for each area and family. There are also flaounes with 'anari', which, for me, are not authentic because we did not use to make them in our home [...] The authentic way [of production] is whatever one has learnt'

(female, 30, Nicosia, written account).

'Everyone thinks that whatever [flaounes] they make at home, these are the authentic ones'

(female, 31, Paphos, oral account).

The family recipe, however old, whether unchanged over the generations or adapted to changing tastes, appears to be yardstick that each Cypriot uses to judge whether a flaouna is truly authentic. This allows for a good deal of flexibility in what is considered authentic in the production and consumption of flaounes. Even the use of non-traditional, or non-Cypriot cheese or the use of newer methods of making flaounes are legitimised as long as this is the norm in one's family tradition.

Origin of recipes

Flaounes are normally prepared from memory, without fixed measurements. Nevertheless, as early as the sixties codification and written accounts of recipes (often retrospective) are not uncommon. However, even when a written recipe is followed, a great deal of tacit, unstated knowledge is assumed. For instance, the baker is expected to estimate on the spot how much liquid the dough needs or how many eggs should go in the cheese filling. These vary every year, depending e.g. on the size and maturity of the cheese, so even the most detailed written recipes never give exact measurements, or an exhaustive list of processes.

'We follow the same recipe every year, with little variation, depending on the outcome of the year before. The recipes originate from various women that knew how to make flaounes and they would transmit the recipe to their [female] friends or their children. Lately there are many television shows, in which famous Cypriot chefs show how flaounes are made. Sometimes the family recipe is modified based on these recommendations.'

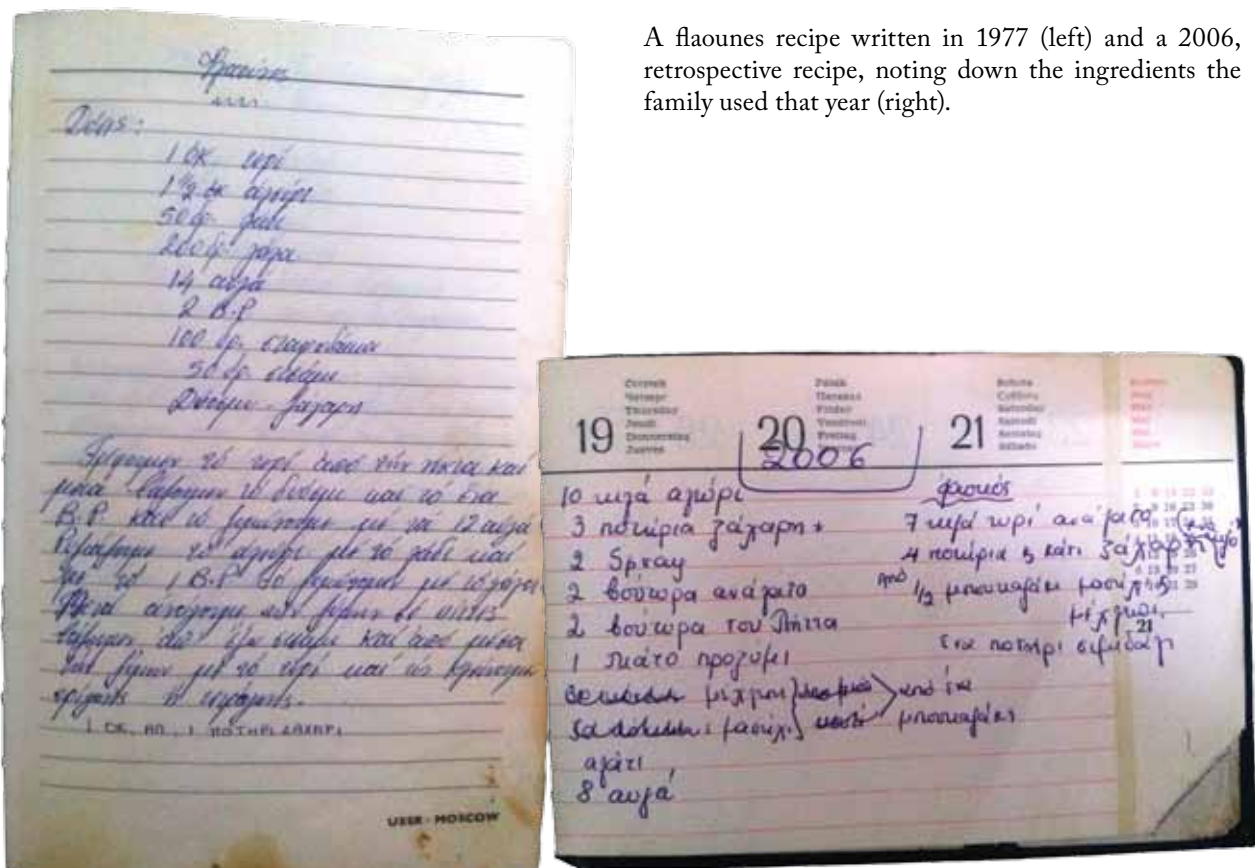
(female, 29, Nicosia, written account)

The recipe for flaounes used by Cypriots is based on the family recipe that may come from the mother, the mother-in-law, the grandmother, neighbours and other relatives and friends. The family recipe does not remain unchanged. It is adapted year-by-year in response to mistakes of past years, evolving family taste, dietary requirements, new advice from friends, family, celebrity chefs etc. A number of informants mention that the starting point of the recipe they use is that of their mother, or if that was not available, that of a woman in the local community. That recipe was then adapted based on their mother-in-law's recipes, especially if the mother-in-law was from a community with a distinct flaounes-making tradition (most notably, Paphos). Even the oldest participants, in their late eighties, would still tweak their flaounes recipes every year.

'Through the centuries a recipe is solidified and perfected, depending, of course, on how tastes change over the years.'

(female, 68, Nicosia, written account)

The passing of time appears to be beneficial for the flaounes recipes of Cypriot home cooks. Change in recipes through trial and error, new information, and better access to ingredients is viewed as improvement, rather than deplored as loss of authenticity.



A flaounes recipe written in 1977 (left) and a 2006, retrospective recipe, noting down the ingredients the family used that year (right).

The history of flaounes

The history of the flaounes-making customs is lost in the depths of collective memory. One perspective is the following:

‘I believe it comes from the byzantine years when children went from house to house to announce the resurrection of Christ and were given a similar cake that had nuts in it. I cannot remember what it was called but the tradition has carried on from generation to generation.’

(female, 38, London, written account)

Although in some regions of Cyprus, especially in the North and the West of the island, this custom is at least a century-old, some of the older informants (above eighty years old), mentioned that the custom was not widespread among poorer families, in the first half of the 20th century.

The word ‘flaouna’ according to the historian Kyriakos Hadjiioannou comes from the ancient Greek word παλάθη (pa’lathe), a flat fruit cake, associated with religious celebrations of Spring and Harvest and the cognate Old High German word *flado*: a pastry prepared with eggs, milk and cheese (and fruit) for Easter. *Flado* then entered Latin and then French, in the form of *flaon*. The Medieval French *flaon* is a pastry made of eggs, and cheese or butter and, just like the Latin *flado* (mentioned as early as the 6th century AD), closely linked with Easter.

The following diagram, adapted from Hadjiioannou’s study (‘Παλάθη – Flado > Flado-onis > Flaon > Φλαούννα: Their historical background and etymology’, 1970), shows the trajectories through which the word ‘flado’ entered European languages. The word has taken various forms in Modern European languages and usually means round, flat cakes or pastries made of various ingredients (including egg, butter, curd, cheese, and fruits) which were initially associated with religious occasions.

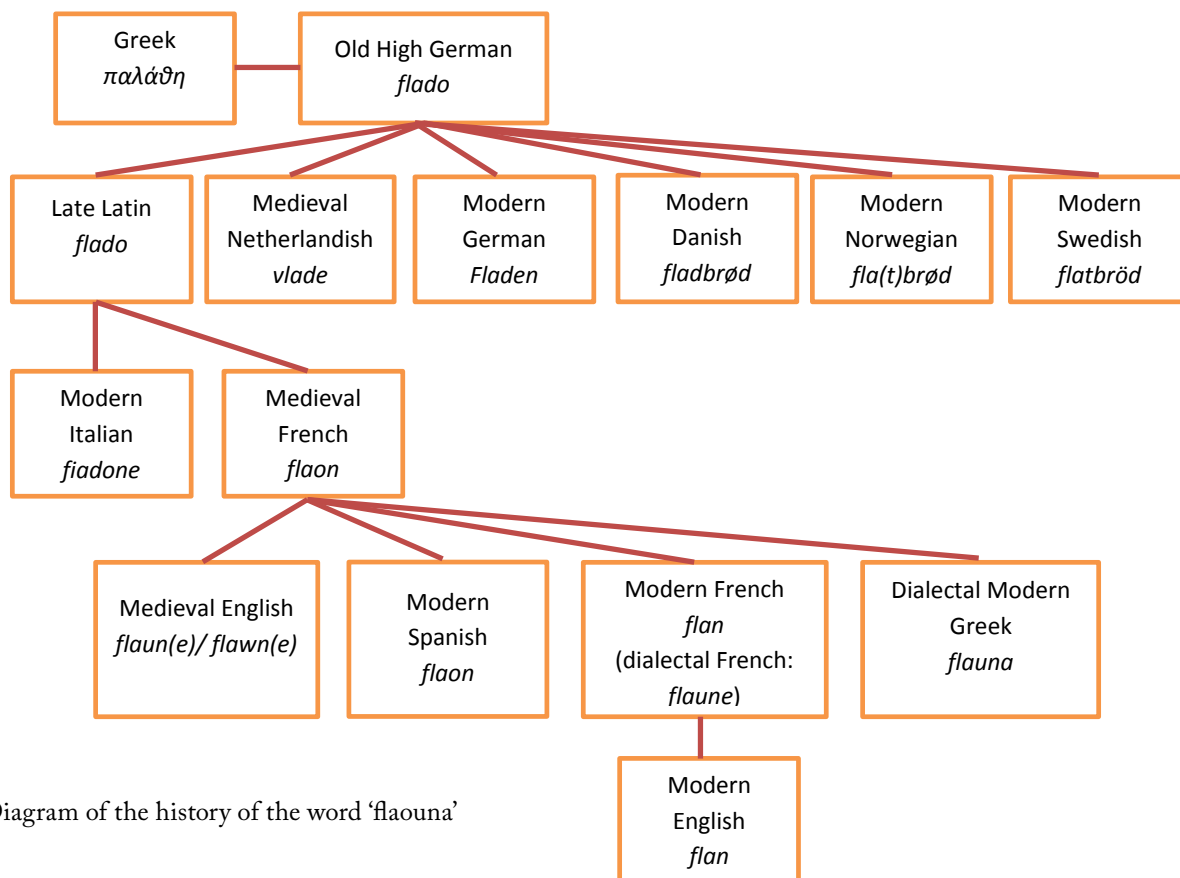


Diagram of the history of the word ‘flaouna’

In modern Greek, flaouna is encountered only in Greek speaking areas that were under the Frankish domination, between the 13th and the 15th century, e.g. Thrace, Peloponnese and islands including Cimolos, Corfu, Crete, and Cyprus. The word often signifies a flatbread. Only in Cyprus (which was under Frankish rule of the Lusignan dynasty between 1192 and 1489) have flaounes maintained the original ingredients of the Latin *flado* and French *flaon* and the tradition of consuming them on Easter Sunday. The word is encountered as *flaouna* (‘φλαούννα’) or *vlaouna* (‘βλαούννα’) in the Cypriot Greek dialect and *pilavuna* in the Cypriot Turkish dialect.

The politics of flaounes

In 1960, when Cyprus was granted its independence from British rule, 78% of the population were Greek Cypriots and 18% Turkish Cypriots, with ethnic minorities and foreigners making up the remainder 4%. Despite a history of relatively peaceful co-existence, the two largest communities of Cypriots, the Greek-Cypriot majority and the Turkish-Cypriot minority, have suffered from intercommunal violence, culminating in a Greek and Greek/Cypriot-led coup in July 1974, and the Turkish invasion in July and August of 1974. As a consequence of the invasion, the country was partitioned into the government-controlled, almost exclusively Greek-Cypriot area (in the South) and the Turkish-controlled area (in the North, later self-declared as ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus’) and forced dislocation of the two communities occurred.

As flaounes are a pastry produced by both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities and relatively unknown in the two motherlands (Greece and Turkey), they have been employed as evidence of the common cultural heritage of the two communities. For example, in 2004 a rapprochement film was produced entitled ‘Flaouna - Pilavuna: A common pastry for Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots’. This film, funded by the Bi-communal Development Programme (of the USA and UN) and directed by George Sycallides, presents the tradition of making flaounes. It juxtaposes a Greek Cypriot and a Turkish Cypriot woman showcasing their similar recipes for flaounes. This shared tradition is framed as one of the many commonalities in values and aspects of everyday life (including folk dancing and music, language elements, cuisine) between Turkish and Greek Cypriots.

DOW	
DORA	ISMET
Flour	Flour
Yeast	Yeast
Milk	Milk
Salt	Salt
Vegetable oil	Vegetable oil
Eggs	Cream of milk
Mahlepi powder	Baking powder
Mastic	Yogurt

Still image at 8.15 from the short film ‘Flaouna - Pilavuna: A common pastry for Greek-Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots’, (2004, directed by George Sycallides). It shows the similarities in the ingredients that go in the flaounes dough, as it is prepared by Greek Cypriot Dora and Turkish Cypriot Ismet

Collection of the best flaounes recipes

I am not alone in (unashamedly) thinking that my own family's recipe for flaounes is the best. My mother's side of the family is from a suburb of Nicosia and my father's side from Paphos (city-centre), so we make flaounes with sweet dough and two types of cheese filling: sweet and savoury. Our recipe changes slightly every year, but this is the best, most detailed and downscaled version I could put together.

My family's recipe

For the dough:

- 2 kg of durum wheat flour and 2 kg of farina wheat flour
- 1 tin of vegetable shortening (350 gr)
- 1 packet unsalted milk butter (227gr)
- 1 jar (200 gr) Cypriot confectionery butter (butter ghee produced from milk cream)
- 1 ½ cups of sugar
- 4 egg-sized balls of leavening
- 3-4 eggs
- 5 gr ground mastic
- 5 gr ground mehlepi (mahleb)
- Pinch of salt
- 1 ½ litres of lukewarm whole-fat milk (approximately)

The leavening needed for this recipe



Savoury cheese filling:

- 1.600 gr mature salty flaouna cheese from Paphos
- 400 unsalted flaouna cheese
- ½ cup of semolina
- ¾ cup of flour
- 9 eggs and 2 egg yolks (approximately)
- 2 egg-sized balls of leavening
- 2 gr ground mastic
- 2 gr ground mehlepi (mahleb)
- 1 cup of raisin
- 1 ½ cups of mint
- 1 teaspoon of baking powder (optional)

Sweet cheese filling:

- 3 kg of unsalted flaouna cheese
- ¾ cup semolina

- 1 cup flour
- 8 eggs and 2 egg yolks (approximately)
- 3 egg-sized balls of leavening
- 3 gr ground mastic
- 3 gr ground mehlep (mahleb)
- 1 ½ cups of raisins
- 1 ½ cups of sugar
- 2 cups of chopped mint
- 3 teaspoons of baking powder

Sesame seeds and beaten eggs for glazing

Process for the cheese filling (the day before):

- Grate all cheeses the afternoon before and put the cheese for the sweet and for the savoury flaounes in separate bowls.
- The night before dissolve the leavening in the beaten eggs and add it to the grated cheese.
- Add the flour, semolina, mahlep and mastic and the eggs (one by one) until a firm mixture is formed. (The filling for the sweet flaounes needs to be as firm as possible, because as soon as sugar is added it will become moister).



The cheese filling in the morning, before raisins and mint are added.

For the dough (on the day):

- Crumble the dry ingredients with the butters.
- Create a well in the flour and add the leavening and dissolve it with the eggs.
- Gently warm the milk and add as much as needed to knead the flour. Knead for 15 minutes. The dough should be fluffy and not stick to the hands.

To put everything together:

- Roll the dough into thin disks of pastry and put aside.
- Just before you are about to start assembling the flaounes, add the mint, the raisins and the baking powder in each bowl and the sugar (in the sweet filling).
- Place each dough disk in a tray with wet sesame, making sure the sesame sticks on the pie.
- Fill the side without sesame with the cheese filling and fold. (We fold the sweet flaounes in triangles and the savoury in squares).
- Before baking, glaze with beaten eggs and more sesame seeds. Bake in medium oven (slightly reducing the temperature every 10 minutes) for at least one hour.
- Each kilo of cheese would make about 10 large square or 12 large triangular flaounes.

A traditional flaounes recipe from the region of Paphos

This is another recipe for flaounes, of a seventy-nine year old Greek Cypriot woman from the Kritou Terra village, north of Paphos. This is a recipe for savoury flaounes, in unsweetened dough, and is closer to older recipes. The informant demonstrated this recipe to her two granddaughters in Easter 2015, when the granddaughters (in their late twenties and early thirties) first attempted to make flaounes by themselves.

Cheese filling:

- 2 whole flaouna cheeses (approximately 2kg each)
- Ground mehlepi
- Ground mastic
- 2 glasses wheat farina flour
- Leavening
- 30 Eggs

Dough:

- 5 kg durum wheat flour
- 4 glasses vegetable oil
- Aniseed
- Ground Mastic
- Milk
- Leavening
- Yeast

Process for the cheese filling (the night before):

- Grate the cheese the night before and pour flour, ground mehlepi and mastic on top.
- Create a well in the cheese, place the leavening in it.
- Add eggs, a few at a time, to dissolve the leavening.
- Then slowly knead the cheese with the egg and leavening mix.

For the dough (on the day):

- Crumble the flour with the oil.
- Add the aniseed, mastic and yeast.
- Create a well in the flour and add the leavening and dissolve it with the milk.
- Then knead the leavening with the flour, adding as much milk as needed to make a firm dough.

To put everything together:

- Add raisins and chopped mint to the cheese filling.
- Roll thin disks with the dough, fill with balls of the cheese filling, fold in square or round shapes, leaving the centre uncovered, glaze with beaten eggs and sesame and bake.

The future of flaounes

‘As long as there are Cypriots, there will be flaounes’

(female, 32, Limassol, oral account)

Predictions for the future of flaounes are overwhelmingly positive, by participants of all ages and genders, residing in Cyprus and abroad. The younger generations of Cypriots are involved in the preparation of flaounes and the development and continuation of family recipes and traditions appears unthreatened. All the informants of this study anticipate that Cypriots will keep making (or buying) and consuming flaounes at Easter time and that this will remain a ‘live aspect of our tradition’ (male, 74, written account, Paphos).

Younger informants, whether they themselves make flaounes or not, emphasised that, as flaounes are part and parcel of the Cypriot tradition, it is their duty to preserve the custom and pass it on to generations to come.

A view that has increased popularity among those who are not actively involved in the preparation of flaounes (i.e. male informants and also some younger female informants) entails increased commercialisation. They anticipate that in the future more and more families would be purchasing flaounes from bakeries, as opposed to making them at home, and perhaps this pastry would be consumed throughout the year. Even so, the link between flaounes and Cypriotness is not expected to weaken. Regardless of the commercialisation of the pastry, flaounes would remain ‘a product that has Cyprus as its exclusive country of origin’ (female, 68, written account, Nicosia).



Folding the dough around the cheese filling

Final thoughts

Flaounes are a live tradition, closely linked with religious festivities and family memories. Cypriots propose a number of criteria for authenticity, including taste, ingredients, shape, and relation to personal experiences. Fortunately, it appears that neither the authenticity nor the future of flaounes are threatened, since this pastry is seen as quintessentially Cypriot and inextricably linked to enduring (albeit evolving) tastes and practices.



Flaounes and other Easter pastries from Cyprus

Glossary of flaounes-related terms

Anari is a soft, white Cypriot whey cheese, made of goat or sheep milk, similar to ricotta. It is the by-product of halloumi cheese making.

Flado is an Old High German word (8th - 11th century AD) denoting a pastry prepared with eggs, milk and cheese (and fruit) and eaten on Easter-day.

Flaon is the medieval French word (12th century AD onwards) for a pastry made of eggs and cheese or butter associated with the Easter season.

Flaouna (in singular) and **flaounes** (in plural) are festive, labour-intensive cheese pies, widely produced and consumed in Cyprus over Easter time.

Flaouna cheese is a speciality hard Cypriot cheese, used only during Easter-time for the preparation of flaounes. It is typically made of goat and sheep milk (although recently cow milk may also be added) the weeks before Easter. The variety of flaouna cheese produced in Paphos is more salty and mature.

Fokos (pronounced ‘foukos’, in the region of Paphos) is the cheese-based filling that goes into the flaounes. It typically consists of grated flaouna cheese kneaded with eggs, mint, raisins, spices and leavening or yeast.

Halloumi is the most well-known Cypriot dairy product and is made of sheep and goat (and optionally also cow’s) milk. When it is fresh, it is white and soft and if left to mature in brine it becomes hard, saltier and light yellow. This cheese, also known as ‘hellim’ (Turkish name), does not melt during cooking.

Kannaouri is seeds from the cannabis plant. In some recipes for flaounes, kannaouri seeds are toasted and added in the cheese filling (fokos).

Kefalotyri is a Greek, Cypriot and Turkish salty hard cheese from sheep and goat milk. It tastes similar to parmesan and gruyere and may be used in flaounes.

Mastic is the resin from the mastic tree (*Pistacia lentiscus*). The small, sun-dried pieces of resin are typically ground to a fine powder in a mortar and pestle (with the addition of sugar or flour) and then added to flaounes and other Cypriot breads and pies.

Mehlepi (‘mahlepi’ in Standard Modern Greek and ‘mahleb’ or ‘mahlab’ or ‘mahaleb’ in Arabic) is a spice made from the tiny stones of the St Lucie cherry and is common in Greek, Cypriot, Turkish and Middle Eastern cuisine. It has a bitter taste and a distinct warm flavour close to cardamom or bitter almond. Just like mastic, mehlepi is ground and added to flaounes and other Cypriot pastries.

Palathe (παλάθη) is a flat fruit cake associated with religious celebrations of Spring and Harvest in ancient Greece (first mentioned in 5th century BC). In Attica, palathe was made of dried figs for the feast of Plynteria.

Paskia (in singular) and **paskies** (in plural) are a special type of flaounes, in which pieces of fried lamb are added to the cheese filling. Paskies are round, and the top is either left uncovered, like flaounes, or the filling is fully covered between two disks of dough. They are found exclusively in the region of Paphos, Cyprus.

Pilavuna is the word for ‘flaouna’ in the variety of Turkish spoken in Cyprus.

Vlaouna (in singular) and **vlaounes** (in plural) is an alternative pronunciation of ‘flaounes’ in the Cypriot Greek dialect.

Pressing apple juice. Photograph by Bill Bradshaw

© Welsh Perry and Cider Society



Cider in Wales

For apples: thence thy industry shall gain
Tenfold reward: thy garners, thence, with store
Surcharg'd, shall burst: thy press with purest juice
Shall flow, which, in revolving years, may try
Thy feeble feet and bind thy falt'ring tongue

(Philips, *Cider: A Poem in Two Books* 1791: 9)

The early history of the fermented alcoholic drink made with apples that we know today as cider (or *seidr* in Welsh) is unclear although, as Williams-Davies states in '*Cider Making in Wales*' (1984), a fruit-based fermented drink was known to the Romans and appears in fifth and sixth French monastic records. He continues to explain that, by the twelfth century, cider made exclusively from apples was firmly established in the Basque country from whence it travelled northwards to Normandy, England and Wales. Historical references are scant, but a cider press is recorded in a house in Staffordshire in 1200 and there are direct references to the production and sale of cider in the thirteenth century.¹ By the fourteenth century, according to Williams-Davies, cider was well established in Herefordshire and the Welsh border counties, which were socially and economically connected to the extent that western parts of Herefordshire were Welsh-speaking. Although historical records are sparse, literary references, especially poetry, give us some indication of cider drinking in the medieval period. As Gutun Owain wrote to the Abbot Siôn near Llangollen:

*Dir i mi gan seidr a medd
Oedi gwin a da Gwynedd*

It is not surprising that I, in view of the [abundance of] cider and mead [at Valle Crucis]
do tarry from tasting the wine and bounty of Gwynedd

(in Williams-Davies 1984: 2)

A clearer picture emerges in the historical records of the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, which point to the prevalence of cider in the areas in Wales typically associated with orchards and cider making – the south-east and border counties. These were not the only regions, however, consuming, and possibly producing, cider. Papers from the Mostyn Estate in north-east Wales make reference to apples being grown for cider, as do records from Pembrokeshire. This history is reflected in contemporary craft producers who have contributed to this research: while many are centred in the south-east and borders, Dee Ciders use apples from the Mostyn Estate; Gethin's and Toloja are based in the south-west; and Welsh Mountain Cider are based in mid-Wales. Nevertheless, the

¹ http://www.archiveofciderpomology.co.uk/Origins_of_cider.htm. See this website for a list of cider records in the medieval period.

lowland areas of the south-east and the border counties were, and continue to be, the heart of cider-making in Wales. This does not mean that those in other regions did not drink, or even produce, cider: estate records across Wales report that farmers and publicans bought cider in from the lowland areas, especially merchants in Hereford,² or took purchased apples back to their farms and awaited the travelling cider mill.

*Gwaith y merched hyn yn union
Nyddu rhai gwlanenni meinion
Trin seidr o'r perllanau tewfrith
A gweithio hetiau gwellt y gwenith*

The women here are employed
In spinning some fine flannels
In making cider from the bounteous orchards
And in making hats from wheat straw

(unknown 1720, in William-Davies 1984: 5)

Cider in Wales was primarily a domestic enterprise. Cider was produced or bought into the farm to be drunk by the household and farm workers, as well as to pay for those farm workers' labour. Despite the law prohibiting using cider as part payment of wages (*Truck Act* 1887), and the rise of non-conformist religion and the temperance movement in the nineteenth century, this custom continued with workers sometimes prepared to work for just cider and food, especially during harvest time. The old adage 'no cider, no work' held firm, with the customary allowance being between two and four quarts a day: farmers with poor cider or frugal supplies struggled to source and retain labour. Cider allowances could, of course, also cause problems and were, in some circles, regarded as a 'fore-runner of idleness, drunkenness and debauchery' (Billingsley in Williams-Davies 1984: 45). For example, Brecknock was reported in 1847 as having 'defective' morals 'owing to the [so prevalent] system of drinking cider'³ and earned the label of being 'the cider-besotten county' (Green 1934, *ibid*: 47).

As such, commercial cider making did not really develop in Wales in comparison to that of the English counties where cider production was, in part, characterised by scientific innovation, commercial enterprise and a more refined taste. These developments were not uncommonly driven by members of the gentry and visionary individuals, such as Viscount John Scudamore (1601-1671), who is accredited to have developed the redstreak cider apple, and the diarist John Evelyn (1620-1708), who produced the book *Pomona*. Whilst remaining a drink of the working people, cider also graced the tables of the upper classes and the drinking glasses and ornaments of the eighteenth century suggest it reached a high point in this period, albeit against a backdrop of multiple declines, revivals and expansions.⁴



An early cider glass

© Hereford Cider Museum

² For example, letters of the Wynne family of Bodewryd, Anglesey discuss the transportation of cider.

³ *Report of the State of Education in Wales* (1847)

⁴ http://www.archiveofciderpomology.co.uk/Origins_of_cider.htm

Consequently, cider in Herefordshire was judged to be the best in the country and ‘so adjudged by all good palates’ according to one commentator in Evelyn’s *Pomona*, whereas the product that was domestically produced on farms – where arguably quantity was of greater import than quality – was depicted as a more acquired taste. As Worlidge states in reference to ‘family cider’:

...This dreadful draught, which tastes like steel filings mixed with vinegar and mud, is, it appears compounded of more or less rotten apples heaped up in orchards for pigs and fowls to feed on, whereof the juice expressed into dirty casks, may be at times diluted with water from a neighbouring horse pond.

(in Williams-Davies 1984: 10)

Welsh cider, as the number of taste awards won by our contributing producers demonstrate, has clearly come a long way since these days on the farm but its economic and social history, and the perceptions that travel with this history, may go some way to explaining why it is less widely recognised than its peers from the English counties of Herefordshire and Somerset. In the following pages we hope to show that Welsh cider has a heritage of which it can be proud, as well as a vibrant and diverse contemporary scene.



Cider making in 1977 at Cilgwyn Farm Boughrood, Powys.

© St Fagans National History Museum



Horse-driven itinerant cider mill.

© Welsh Folk Museum

Cider Recipes

Welsh Rarebit with a twist

Hazel Thomas

There is a tradition in Wales to melt old pieces of cheese on an enamel plate and then spread the melted cheese onto chunks of bread. One could suggest that the Welsh Rarebit recipe that contains beer may have evolved from this tradition. The former is peasant food however, and I would imagine that this would have been enjoyed on many a farm along with a glass of craft cider. In my recipe I have combined the old tradition with the more sophisticated recipe known as Welsh Rarebit, which contains mustard and beer, by using craft cider and Toloja Sweet Herb mustard in the ingredients list. The boxed cheese is from a local producer and works well in this recipe.

Ingredients

- 1 Golden Cenarth (250g boxed cheese by Caws Cenarth Cheese)
- 1-2 tsp Toloja Sweet Herb mustard
- 50ml medium dry Welsh craft cider
- A pinch of freshly ground black pepper

Method

1. Heat the oven to 180°C.
2. Remove the wrapping from the Golden Cenarth cheese and tie a piece of string around the box to strengthen the box during cooking.
3. Mix the Toloja Sweet Herb mustard (or grain mustard of choice) with the cider and black pepper.
4. Cut into the top of the Golden Cenarth cheese using the marks already made in the cheese as the guide (cut down to almost the bottom of the cheese).
5. Take the mixture (No. 3) and slowly pour this onto the cheese so that it seeps into the cuts made in the cheese – You can squeeze the box gently to open the cuts in the cheese.
6. Place the box onto a baking tray and place into the preheated oven.
7. Allow to cook until the cheese has completely melted and is bubbling slightly: This normally takes around 30 minutes.
8. Remove from the oven and place carefully on a serving plate.
9. Serve with chunks of bread for dipping into the cheese.



© Hazel Thomas

Toloja Sweet Herb Mustard Pork Tenderloin

Nikki Sweet

Ingredients

Wild Boar Pork tenderloin or variety of choice (allow 5oz of meat in weight per person – as a guide 1 average sized tenderloin would feed 2 people)

Toloja Sweet Herb mustard

1 red apple

Cider brandy

Pembrokeshire new potatoes

Chantenay carrots (leave a little bit of the green stalk on the top)

Streaky bacon slices (again wild boar but you can choose an alternative variety)

Some butter for cooking the apples

Method

1. Slice the tenderloin lengthways butterfly style.
2. Spread some sweet herb mustard inside the tenderloin and close the meat back to its original shape.
3. Wrap the tenderloin tightly with the streaky bacon (use as many slices as required to cover the meat as this will prevent the meat from drying out too much during cooking).
4. You can seal the meat before transferring into a preheated oven to complete the cooking process. Place in a preheated oven at 180°C for about 20 minutes or until the meat feels firm and the juices begin to look clear.
5. Boil the potatoes with some salt until cooked.
6. Boil the carrots until tender, drain and add a little orange juice and some orange zest to the pan, re-heat when ready to dish up.
7. Core the apple (leave the skin on) and cut into rings about 5mm thick.
8. Remove the tenderloin from the oven (the bacon should be cooked and browned) let the meat rest.
9. Melt butter in a frying pan, add the apple rings with a little brown sugar, and a splash of cider brandy to flame until brown and caramelised.
10. Cut the tenderloin on a slant as you portion the meat (you should see the marbling effect of the mustard inside).
11. Place the caramelised apples on top of the meat, arrange the carrots and potatoes on the plate and drizzle the juices from the apples around the plate and over the potatoes.



© Hazel Thomas

Sticky Toffee Apple Pudding

Hazel Thomas

For the Pudding

Ingredients

- 4 firm skinned apples of choice
- 1 egg
- 50g butter
- 100g self raising flour
- 100g dark muscovado sugar or molasses sugar
- 200ml medium dry cider

Method

1. Cream the butter and sugar until pale in colour.
2. Add the egg and beat well.
3. Add the sifted flour.
4. Cut the top off the apple, keeping it to create a lid.
5. Remove the core carefully without cutting through to the bottom of the apple and throw the core away.
6. Continue to core out a little of the apple flesh to create a cavity for the pudding mixture.
7. Chop the cored apple and add to 200ml of dry cider.
8. Allow the chopped apple to sit in the cider for a few minutes before adding it all to your pudding mixture.
9. Mix well and fill the apples with the mixture making sure the mixture sits above the apple cavity so that you can sit the lid on top of the mixture (you could use a cocktail stick to hold the lid in place but remember to remove before serving).
10. Place in a preheated oven and cook for 30 minutes.
11. Serve hot with the toffee sauce.

For the Sauce

Ingredients

- 100g butter
- 100ml medium dry cider
- 100g sugar
- 250ml double cream

Method

1. Melt the butter with the sugar and cider until it starts to bubble.
2. Add the double cream and bring back to a gentle simmer.
3. Do not boil but allow to simmer gently until the sauce thickens to the required consistency.
4. Pour over the apple puddings before serving.



© Hazel Thomas

What Makes Craft Cider?

Perspectives of Producers

Dave Matthews, Bartestree Cider

Written by Emma-Jayne Abbots

Bartestree Cider produce bespoke, small-batch pure-juice ciders and perries from local Herefordshire fruit. Their speciality is the production of single varietal ciders and perries, using apples such as Foxwhelp, Yarlington Mill, Hereford Chisel Jersey and Brown Snout amongst others.

For Dave, a good craft cider must be ‘massively fruity’ and full flavoured, and this can only be produced through passion and integrity. A cider really is an extension of its producer’s personality. It is critical that the fruit flavour comes through without any distractions. In order to get this fruitiness into his ciders, Dave stresses that only perfectly ripe apples, which are picked and collected at exactly the right moment, can be used. A great deal of care and attention to detail is therefore required, as all the fruits need to be sorted and washed to ensure that only those that are perfect make their way into the end product: even one unripe or rotten apple can have a detrimental effect on the quality of the flavour. This is clearly a labour intensive and time-consuming process, as is manually using the beautiful Victorian press which produces the juice that ferments into Bartestree Ciders. Slow long fermentation in casks also adds a depth of flavour and gives the drink character. But the time and energy is worth it for the resulting fruity flavour.

Balance is also essential and a good craft cider will have a perfect balance of acid, tannins and sugar. This balancing act demonstrates the skill of the cider maker, especially as Dave produces his cider with the minimum level of intervention or interference, using just the pure juice from the press with nothing added.

One of the joys of craft cider making for Dave is the way it involves living in tune with the seasons. As he says, ‘In January we wassail the old trees, in April and May we look for the blossom, in August we check the fruit set on the trees, and in the autumn we mill and press the fruit’. Historical continuities are also important to Dave and he has worked tirelessly to promote and protect the heritage and traditions of Welsh craft cider. He initiated the Welsh Perry and Cider Society, has researched the history of cider making in the country and set up the Museum Orchard, based at Raglan Cider Mill, which contains the trees of all known varieties of Welsh perry pears and cider apples. As he explained, ‘I love the idea that you’re under a 300 year old tree and you’re making perry from that tree for the first time in about 50 years, and you’re tasting what people tasted 300 years ago’.



(Image reproduced with kind permission of Dave Matthews)

Dr Mike Penney, Troggi Cider

Written by Elaine Forde

Mike makes Troggi cider and perry in the Earlswood Valley, Monmouthshire. His cider takes its name from the brook that runs through the Earlswood valley.

In Mike's words:

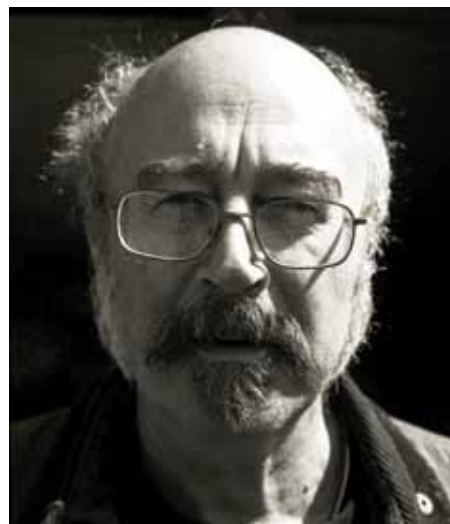
I moved to Earlswood in 1983. It was the autumn, and the house that we bought had a small orchard – about half an acre – and my wife then started an agricultural course at Usk Agricultural College. While she was there she noticed that the college had a mill and cider press set up and they would use this to contract mill and press apples for anyone who wished to bring them along. So the following year in '84 we picked our apples and, because there were far more than you could possibly use in a house, we took along containers and the apples in sacks and the students in the college milled and pressed the apples, and we got the juice back in the containers we provided. In those days we were making 40–50 gallons of cider, and it really started from then.

So we carried on like that for about three years until the equipment at the college one year broke down ... Bernard Price [from Llanishen, using his father's itinerant cider mill] pressed my apples and pears for about three years. I was in my thirties then so I thought he was quite an elderly gentleman, though he was probably much younger than I am now. And I thought, well he's never going to be doing this forever so I should make my own contingencies, so I looked around to purchase my own mill and press and I found one up in Abbey Dore. This was a Workman press. It was a particular press that had won a Royal Agricultural Exhibition prize in about 1890, its feature was the fact that it had two screws to it, so there was a beam brought down by two screws with two big helical gears on the top driven by worms running on a shaft across the front and you would wind it down like a clock. That was quite hard work as well and, as the team were getting older as the time went by, in about 2008 – 6 or 7 years ago – I then sought a hydraulic press.

The labour isn't changing because of the technology, the labour's changing because we're all getting older and people are dying! One of my particular colleagues who helped me in the past died a couple of years ago so I have had to source other help. So we get help from all sorts of quarters now, my son brings a great group of his old university friends down and they come and help. I also have help from an allotment society in Cardiff and also there's an orcharding group in Cardiff and they come and help. I get help coming from the most peculiar quarters. I get help from all over the place and the more the merrier really as it is a lot of work, particularly when you're collecting the fruit by hand, not using mechanical methods which is what I do, and is particularly required for perry because a lot of perry fruit is very delicate and you can't have machinery collecting it very efficiently anyway.

At first our cider was OK but rather on the thin side, so we started to source more traditional cider apples from the area – there are quite a lot if you know where to look – and also started making perry because the area is a very traditional perry area.

The English would have you believe that the perry counties are Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, but missing from that trio is of course Monmouthshire. The perry areas of Gloucestershire largely are on the banks of the river Wye and the Severn. Of course we share the



Mike Penney, April 2015.

Photograph by Gruffydd E. Jones.
© *Casgliad y Werin Cymru / People's Collection Wales*

bank of the Wye and also we have a very close river, the Usk, running north and these are well populated with perry trees as you go north. The most southerly perry tree I know of is just outside Newport in Nash, so right down near the mouth of the Usk. In my own valley, the Earlswood Valley, there are perry trees there as well so the climatic conditions are ideal for growing perry trees.

Bill Bleasedale, Welsh Mountain Cider



(Reprinted with kind permission from Bill Bleasedale (2011) How to Grow Apples and Make Cider, 2nd ed.
<http://www.welshmountaincider.com/index.php/make-cider/buy-our-book>)

Andy Hallet, Hallets

Written by Elaine Forde

Ann and Andy Hallet's farm, Blaengawney, is situated on a blustery hilltop outside of the village of Hafodyrynys. It enjoys a spectacular view over the valleys towards Caerphilly. Blaengawney borders a forestry plantation of mixed conifer, including some very mature Scots pine. Blaengawney's track is very rough and about half a mile long, edged on either side by enormous beech trees; part of an overstood hedge.

Andy Hallett invited us to look around his cider mill. We followed the contour of the hill round to an open sided barn. At the end of the barn we passed an area filled with pallets with boxes containing cider piled up. Beyond that was further space devoted to barrels stored on their sides. It became clear that we had reached the cider mill. Inside the barn was a selection of very shiny, stainless steel vats. On closer inspection these had airlocks at the top; essentially they were huge demijohns. As well as the vats, there were a selection of machines, the effect was altogether a very modern and clean small factory.

We surveyed this area only briefly, before Andy took us round to see his 'old press': 'This is the press I made from scrap from Newman's. It's a good press, but it takes four people to operate. I operate the new press by myself'.

The old press was in a dusty corner, but upon looking at it, it had a hydraulic arm, and even fired up when Andy pressed the power on button. It was surprising that Andy had regarded it as old. Andy went on to explain that there was nothing wrong with the press, the issue was simply that it required four people to operate it. I commented at that point that Andy's cider mill was 'high-tech', Andy was incredulous: 'I'm using exactly the same technology as has always been used, what I've got is just a more modern version, so I can operate it myself'.

He went on to explain that as he saw it there was a direct relationship between his cider-making methods and earlier methods:

They used to say you hang a rotten ham over the barrel to improve the cider, that's where the old wives' tale about a dead rat came from, you must have heard of that. Either way it's the same thing, the maggots drop into the cider and they're basically a protein that feeds the yeast. I use yeast conditioner, although it is considered an additive (this was a reference to the PDO status which bans all additives from 'traditionally made Welsh cider'), but it is essentially a protein and it's better for the fermentation.



Hallets cider mill.

Photograph by Gruffydd E. Jones.

© Casgliad y Werin Cymru / People's Collection Wales

Andy then started pouring juices and explaining how he blended the flavours for his range of ciders. One juice was very cloudy and Andy explained that the cloudiness was due to yeast particles. Hallets cider is absolutely clear. For Andy, removing the yeast particles by filtration was essential in guaranteeing that the fermentation stops in time, thereby ensuring that the cider remains at the same quality as when it is bottled. According to Andy:

For me, that's what craft is, I can guarantee that customers will receive the cider in the same standard as I bottled it. It was the same when I worked as an engineer; you work to guarantee the quality of the item leaving the workshop. For me, that's the definition of craft. OK so because Hallets cider goes all over the place, I have to take steps to make sure it travels well, so that's what this equipment is all about.



Ralph's Cider and Perry

Compiled by Elaine Forde

Ralph's Cider and Perry company, based in New Radnor, have been primary producers of Welsh cider and Perry since 1976. Ralph's cider is produced using traditional equipment: the juice is pressed through cloth or hair using either a Victorian wooden press or a vintage hydraulic press, it is fermented using only the yeasts and tannins found naturally in the apple or in the air, and no chemicals are added to the cider.

Ralph's own heritage has inspired his cider making – his grandfather was also a cider-maker – and now Ralph makes cider with his son, James. Ralph began cider making in 1976, but his job as a farm manager for Bulmer's soon took him to Anglesey where apples were harder to come by. To address this, Ralph began an annual 'pilgrimage' to his cousin's orchard in Radnorshire; Ralph's family would harvest apples, which were pressed in the area before taking the juice back to Anglesey to ferment.

Ralph was encouraged to master cider making by his boss, Bertram Bulmer, until eventually the time came for Ralph to establish his own farm at Old Badland, New Radnor. Old Badland had a dilapidated orchard, which Ralph has now restored so that all the apples and pears that produce Ralph's cider come from their own farm. Ralph now makes a range of ciders and perries, all of which remain true to his pure juice recipe. Ralph's methods have proven successful: over the years Ralph's drinks have scooped a host of awards at events that range from local fairs to international cider contests.

Old Badland farm has a range of traditional presses and other artefacts, as well as the only fully licensed cider mill in Wales. This suggests that, for Ralph, cider heritage is as important as the product itself. In fact, Ralph and James can be regularly found at food fairs around the UK demonstrating the traditional art of cider making. Ralph's Victorian travelling scrapper and cider press had been originally used in Hereford to travel between farms pressing fruit. Now these items of cider making heritage continue to make a circuit, along with Ralph, in order to demonstrate traditional cider-making equipment and techniques to a new generation of cider lovers.

Ralph's are so committed to preserving cider making heritage that they are always on the lookout for ageing pieces of cider making equipment or memorabilia. As well as the antique and vintage

(© Amy Owen)



presses that Ralph continues to use, Ralph's have amassed a collection of cider mats, tools, equipment and other items – even a stone mill that was dismantled and brought back to the farm from Abergavenny. The horse-driven stone mill has now been reassembled and put to the test back at Old Badland farm where it will be preserved as intended for years to come, and available for visitors to see along with the rest of the collection.

Nikki and Kevin Sweet, Toloja Orchard

Written by Elaine Forde

Toloja Orchard is a family business in Ceredigion producing orchard-based products such as preserves, juice, mustards, vinegar, herbal remedies and, of course, cider. Nikki and Kevin Sweet run the business but are helped in no small measure by their children Tom, Lottie and James. In fact, what Kevin calls their 'mainstream cider', Drunk Dewi, was originally son Tom's recipe. Nikki says:

One of the first ciders we won an award for, we can't take credit for – it was our eldest.... At the end of the Apple Weekend at the National Botanic Gardens, the organiser told Tom that he could help himself to whatever apples he wanted, so he went along with a carrier bag and collected them all! He made his own little batch, everything went into it, and it came out really well. I couldn't tell you what the types were, there were so many, and it went in to the sweet cider category at the Welsh Cider and Perry Society awards where it won gold. We couldn't tell anyone anything about what was in it!

The Sweet's consider that there is a fine balance between producing quantity and maintaining quality in cider making. Nikki explained that labour saving equipment was not necessarily desirable:

We got more and more orders, we were supplying more and more shops, doing more and more events... we couldn't do enough so we decided to invest in a belt press. A huge great thing! It washed the apples, took the apples up a spiral tube, scrapped them then took them through presses. It made the cider so fast that the quality of the cider went. There was too much sediment, we just didn't like it. Labour wise the press saved us a lot of time but we've got rid of it. Now we have this lovely twin-screw press. Very old, a lot of work, we don't make as much cider, but the quality is better.



© Nikki and Kevin Sweet 'Toloja'

For Toloja, the key to success is to use all the products of the orchard, Nikki says:

We have diversified. At the start we just did one juice and one cider, but we played around a bit more, and we also made vinegar – by mistake I must admit – but we brought out a range of preserves using the vinegar, so we have diversified: but it is always about the orchard. So if we can pull all that together we can work as a business but still maintain that quality.

On the subject of what makes a cider Welsh, Kevin explained:

As far as I am concerned if the fruit is grown in Wales, processed and all the work is done in Wales then it is a truly Welsh product. It doesn't necessarily have to be an original product from Wales but if it's an item that has been here for a long time and it's on Welsh soil I class it as Welsh. That's what I like to see.



Assembling Welsh Cider

Written by Elaine Forde

Orchards

Orchards are an essential starting point for all cider, and Welsh orchards are implicated in global cider lore. Legend has it that in the sixth century St Teilo brought trees from orchards in Monmouthshire to Dol in Brittany where he, and St Samson, established extensive orchards covering over three miles.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Wales had around 6,000 acres of orchard, almost 4,000 of which were in Monmouthshire. The picture has changed somewhat since then. In June 2014 only approximately 1,220 acres of orchard were recorded in Wales, and of them, almost 750 acres are to be found in Gwent. The landscape of Welsh orchards has therefore changed considerably since St Teilo's days.

Apples

Good cider starts with good apples. Ideally, only cider apples should be used to make cider: cider made only from eating apples is considered 'thin'. Most ciders therefore use a mixture of apples, as there are only a handful of apples that can make a decent single variety cider. Of these, Frederick, widely regarded as a Monmouthshire variety, is thought by some to make a particularly choice single variety cider.



The Frederick apple.

© Andrew Lea

Toloja's award winning 'Drunk Dewi' cider was originally made from a blend of every apple brought to 'Apple Day' at the National Botanic Gardens.

Of course, good perry must have good pears. Pear trees take much longer to establish than apple trees, and a perry-maker's source of perry pears is most likely a closely guarded secret.

Pressing

Before apples can be pressed they must be pulped. Modern cider mills use scratters to chop the apples up but in the past stone mills were common. The most favoured stone for cider mills was Old Red Sandstone usually sourced from the Blorenge Mountain or the Penallt quarries on the west side of the river Wye. Welsh stone was, therefore, an essential part of every stone cider mill and was particularly popular in Hereford. Furthermore, stone mills were driven by horses; a calm stout cob, such as a Welsh cob, was considered ideal.

When pressing apple pulp, it is called a cheese. Traditionally the cheese is pressed through cloth or even hair, Ralph's cider is still pressed in this manner. Some cider makers, such as Toloja, believe that a slower press makes for a better cider and have rejected their modern belt press on that basis.

Brewing

Cider is nowadays brewed in large vats, before either ageing in casks, or bottling. Opinion is divided among cider makers as to how best to ferment the juice. Many Welsh craft cider makers add nothing

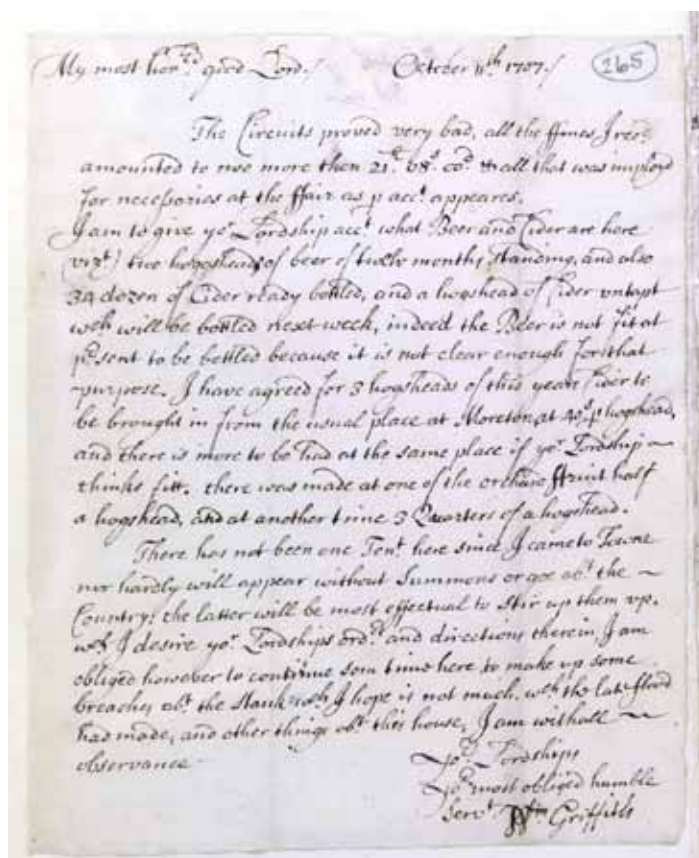
to the juice, leaving the process to the natural wild yeasts on the apple skin, or airborne yeast. This can make for a very locally distinctive brew, but leaves the cider open to the danger of rogue yeast. Other cider makers add yeast conditioner or other additives at this stage to ensure a consistent brew.

Storage and Bottling

Because cider can be stored for up to a year it has long been known as a reliable drink and a dependable source of goodness. As such, cider merchants sprang up all over the UK from the Elizabethan period onwards, to source cider supplies for the gentry to store in their cellars for the months ahead; that is, if they did not already produce cider of their own. This is in contrast to beer, which was only good for about a week. Cider truly was the drink of globalisation, as barrels of the golden juice could safely accompany troops, travellers and merchants around the globe.

Many cider makers today bottle their own cider, but this is a labour intensive process. There is no external bottling plant in Wales, so some Welsh craft cider makers send their cider to England for bottling.

External bottling saves cider makers a lot of time and labour; it makes it possible for many craft cider makers to continue their craft as craft, alongside working in other jobs.



A letter from a cider merchant 1707.

By permission of Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / National Library of Wales



Cider tasting at the 2015 WPCS cider festival.

Photograph by Gruffydd E. Jones.

© Casgliad y Werin Cymru / People's Collection Wales

Enjoying Welsh cider

Each year, £2.7 billion worth of cider is sold in the UK. Although only a small proportion of these sales will be of craft cider, a number of craft cider makers believe that increased publicity for industrially produced cider has benefitted craft cider. Events such as the Welsh Perry and Cider Society's annual Welsh cider festival, food fairs or even 'Cider and Sausage' festivals all help to spread the word that Welsh craft cider is growing while maintaining the all-important quality that distinguishes the drink.

The Welsh Perry & Cider Society

Keeping the Tradition of Cider and Perry Making Alive in Wales

Written by Cressida Slater

In the late nineteenth century cider was widely drunk in Wales, and was a staple drink of the agricultural population, with most farm labourers insisting upon it, taking it as part payment of wages. This farmhouse-style cider, and its traditions still have strong links to the product that's made by cider makers in Wales today, using the fruit from local farms and the same basic, yet refined techniques from over 150 years ago.

With the cider making tradition largely having died out in Wales, and only one cider maker established in 1976, it wasn't until some renewed interest in 2001 that the Welsh Perry and Cider Society (WPCS) was formed. Today there are more than 50 cider makers in Wales ranging from the hobbyist to the full-time business.

Set up by cider maker Dave Matthews and enthusiast Alan Golding, the WPCS is a not-for-profit Company Limited by Guarantee, run by a voluntary board of Directors and with a membership of over 150 producers and friends. The WPCS has maintained its mission and objectives since its inception, to support the production of Welsh made cider and perry, to promote its appreciation and consumption throughout Wales, the UK and beyond, to preserve our orchards, and to provide advice and guidance to those who wish to learn more about the craft of Welsh cider and perry production.

In 2003 the Welsh Perry and Cider Society's work was recognised by the Campaign For Real Ale (CAMRA), winning their Pomona Award in 2003 for 'their outstanding work raising the profile of Welsh Real cider'. The annual Welsh Perry and Cider Festival and Championships have raised standards and in 2005 Welsh cider makers scooped all the main awards at The UK Championships in Reading, and numerous others in the years since.

In 2009, the Welsh Perry & Cider Society (WPCS) was given the annual award of recognition by the Asturian Cider Foundation, Spain, for the Society's merits and innovations in promoting the production of craft cider; raising awareness of traditional cider; and dedication in maintaining the cultural heritage associated with the conservation and regeneration of native apple varieties through the creation of a gene bank at its museum orchard.

Most recently the WPCS has been leading on an application to the European Commission for PDO status for *Traditional Welsh Cider and Traditional Welsh Perry*. In recent years the quality and rise of Welsh cider and perry has been recognised in both local and national press: '...cider-making in Wales is undergoing a revival. Although production has been traditionally centred around the Monmouthshire and Radnorshire areas... the tradition of cider from small producers lives on and the nation is slowly creeping to the forefront of cider production'.

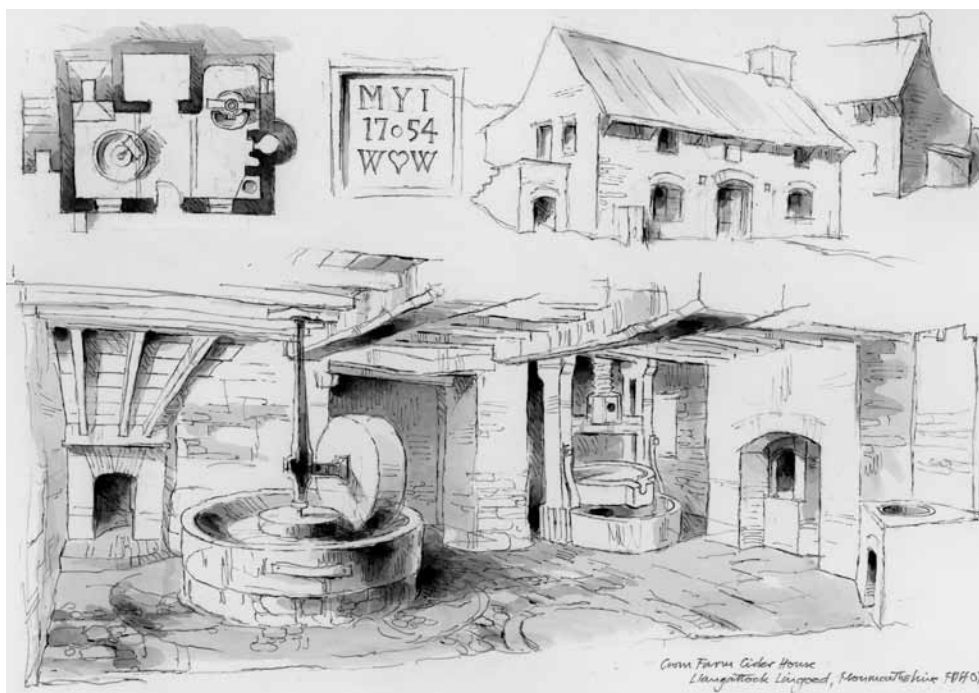
www.welshcider.co.uk



The Heritage of Welsh Cider

Cwm Farm Cider House

Written by Elaine Forde,
with photographs by Gruffydd E. Jones



A sketch of the Cwm Farm cider house.

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A rare example of a wooden screw cider press.

Photographs by Gruffydd E. Jones. © Casgliad y Werin Cymru / People's Collection Wales



The original stone mill.

Cwm Farm, Llangattock Lingoed, is situated right on Offa's Dyke and lies just inside the Welsh border. The land at Cwm Farm comprises semi-improved pasture and cider fruit orchards containing some very impressive trees. Harvey Marks, owner of the farm, invited us to look around the cider house.

The farm buildings are built from red sandstone, which is typical of the area. In the farmyard there is an unassuming small stone building set apart from the other barns. Above the doorway is an inscription –

Harvey told us the building had been dedicated to the owner's late wife who died in childbirth. The building is a cider house and is little changed since it was built in around 1750.

The cider house is a rare example containing an original wooden screw. It was conserved in 2004, and the work was managed and financed by the Village Alive Trust, a buildings preservation trust and charity, part financed by the Welsh Assembly Government through the Article 33 of the European Commission Rural Development Plan for Wales.

Upon entering the cider house, which is not spacious, one immediately sees a huge stone mill just inside the doorway, again made from red sandstone. In the far corner of the building is an ancient cider press with its huge wooden screw descending from an upper level.

Harvey explained that the cider house has a loft space, which would be used for storage while a wall of wooden barrels on the back wall were accessible from outside of the cider house – such features set the building apart from other farm buildings. The cider house is so compact and the mill and press so large that it is hardly conceivable a horse could fit in, in order to drive the mill, but Harvey explained that this is exactly what would have happened.

Although the Cwm Farm Cider House was never used for cider-making in Harvey's lifetime, he recalled that the building itself was in almost constant use. Several features of the building had been installed much later, such as the open-fire range. Indicating a copper boiler inset below a copper washtub/ sink, Harvey told us that he would bathe there as a child. He showed us a hand operated butter churn – churning butter was Harvey's after-school chore – and explained that his mother would take the butter to Abergavenny during rationing, earning an important side income. Harvey also showed us hooks on a beam and explained the process of pig-killing, bleeding, removing the bristles, gutting hanging and salting the important bacon. All these processes took place in the cider house, on and around the mill and press.



The cider house at Cwm Farm.

Photograph by Gruffydd E. Jones. © *Casgliad y Werin Cymru / People's Collection Wales*

Despite cider-making itself having stopped at Cwm Farm there is no doubt that it would have been a productive mill; the immense perry pear trees outside are testament to that. Harvey maintains the trees as a crop for local perry-maker, Gwatkin, and today the perry orchard is being repopulated by new trees, grafted from the original Cwm Farm stock.

Details of open days at Cwm Farm can be found on the Village Alive Trust's website:

<http://villagealivetrust.org.uk/en/>

A Seidr Miscellany

Compiled by Elaine Forde

Cider Lore

In the sixth Century St Teilo of Wales visited Normandy and, with the help of Bishop Sampson, planted an extensive orchard: this led, according to tradition, to the first cider-making in those parts. The remains of this orchard, the 'Arboretum Teliavi and Samsonis' were still to be seen in the twelfth century' (Pollard, A and Beech, F. N. 1957, *Cider Making*. London: Rupert Hart-Davis).

Devonshire Colic, or, Herefordshire disease

Lead poisoning from cider produced by mills sealed at the joints with lead.

Hairs

Large coarse mats, some five feet square, that hold the pomace in place while pressing whilst allowing the apple juice to flow out. Called as such as they were originally made from horse hair.

Mouse

A common production fault, named after a mousy smell that taints the cider and is caused by infection from certain strains of bacteria. The detection of 'mouse' is very personal and varies wildly from person to person, as it is affected by the pH level of the mouth. Accordingly, it is possible to detect mouse more easily by gargling with a bicarbonate of soda solution. If mouse is present there is no real cure, the only remedy is to drink the cider before it gets any worse.

Pig's snout

A type of apple; the cider made from these was called pig's squeal.

'Plant pears for your heirs'

This is a common saying amongst cider makers who insist that the time taken to establish a productive pear tree is such that the planter must think ahead for future generations. Craft cider makers tend to closely guard the origin of their perry pear trees.

Pot Cider

A local Monmouthshire name for 'thin' cider made from eating apples.

Rope

A bacterial fault that leaves the cider oily. In extreme cases the cider forms 'ropes' when poured. Ropiness usually appears early on in small clumps, much like a mother of vinegar. Ropiness can be removed, leaving the cider unaffected with no ill effect on the drinker.

Scratting

The process of mechanically crushing the apples with a scrapper before pressing. The upper pair of rollers in a scrapper are called **urchins** and are studded with metal teeth or knives,

Stunnem

A local word from the Wye Valley, a particularly powerful brew. Two parts perry: One part cider.

Tanglefoot

A problem caused by drinking too much cider. Cyanide from the apple pips causes nerve damage to the feet. This was particularly associated with stone-milling, which took place before the invention of the scrapper mill.

Tump

Like *tump*, a tump is a small hill or a heap and refers to a pile of apples left to ripen and mature ready for processing into juice. Tumping is not advisable for pears which are best pressed when optimally ripe and juicy – but not too ripe lest the juice become 'soupy' and impossible to clarify if required.

Crafting an Authentic Cider

Written by Emma-Jayne Abbots

So what makes a craft cider ‘authentic’? What are the ingredients for authenticity? And what does authenticity mean in the context of cider in Wales? As the preceding pages suggest, authenticity is not a simple concept. We cannot point to one key ingredient that makes a cider either craft or authentic. Instead, authenticity is a complex and subjective notion that involves multiple elements that weave together to create a sum bigger than their parts.

At one level, authenticity seems fairly straightforward. The producers who contributed to our research often mentioned the scale of production – with craft cider being inherently small-scale (however that may be defined) – and the method of production, particularly the need for it to be primarily manual and non-industrial, coming to the fore. Place also played an important role: It was seen to be important that there was a legacy and history of cider making in the region, which is displayed both in the material culture embedded in the landscape, such as Cwm Farm, and in the variety of apples that were, and continue to be, used. To this end, the cultural heritage of cider is of paramount importance.

The production process does not just relate to the level of technology and industrialisation, however. It is also critical, for many of the producers who contributed to this research, that the juice comes from the first press of apples. A number emphasised the need for natural fermentation, without any additions or the use of commercial yeasts – although this was not always agreed upon! The use of technology was also not clear-cut. Some producers argued that all elements of production, including milling and pressing, should be manual whereas others press manually but use contemporary technology for milling and others actively use science and technology in their production processes. All these approaches, however, blend art and science, and manual labour with technological advances to a greater or lesser extent. The question thus emerges as to ‘how much technology and industrialisation is ‘allowed’ before a cider starts to lose its authenticity?’. The answer to this is inherently subjective, varied and for each individual to answer. As Kevin and Nikki from Toloja Orchard explained, they returned to a more manual process as they felt their ciders lost their character whereas for Andy Hallet both ‘traditional’ and more contemporary equipment are ‘tools for the job’. This observation raises further questions about what constitutes technology, as this cannot and should not be assumed. We have to remember that all the processes, techniques and materials which today we see as historical or heritage, such as cider presses from the Victorian era or travelling cider mills, were once technological advances and deemed modern.

Perhaps, therefore, it is easier to say what doesn’t contribute to an authentic craft cider. Material ingredients were particularly salient to producers here, who told us that authentic craft cider must be made using whole apples, not apple concentrate. New flavours and additives were also generally seen to detract from an authentic product. Naturalness, then, is critical (although we can also ask how natural is a product that always requires human intervention to produce). Returning to production processes, the time taken over production is seen to be important and a number of producers, although not all, stressed that the speed of making cider using contemporary technology, contra the slow process required to making a craft cider, resulted in an inauthentic product. This observation reinforces ‘naturalness’ as a key ingredient of authenticity; this was further supported by the ways that producers highlighted how they focus on the entire process from apple trees blossoming to fermentation, and work with natural cycles and the seasons.

Yet authenticity is more than ingredients, production processes, history and cultural heritage. The personalities of producers are rarely accounted for in such discussions but this factor came through strongly in the course of our research. It is in the way that producers approach their cider making with integrity, pride and passion, their desire to make the impossible ‘perfect cider’, the hours of manual labour, the resistance to adding ingredients or taking short-cuts, their engagement with nature, a preference for selling locally instead of through supermarkets, and the value placed on the end product over economic gain that makes a craft cider authentic. These are the intangible ingredients that are not stated on a label but are made manifest in the flavour and taste of the end product. Producers often talk of the ‘character’ of a cider when referring to its taste and in some ways these can be abstracted and identified, such as fruitfulness and the balance between acid and tannins. But character also refers to something that cannot be fully defined, as it relates to the values and ethics that inform how producers approach their ciders and the processes that create them. The authenticity of craft cider lies, therefore, in the authenticity of the producer. As one producer explained, a good cider is ‘an extension of your personality really’.



Photograph by Bill Bradshaw.

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Over the course of this project the research team have been fortunate to work alongside a number of producers and others involved in Welsh cider who have generously given their time and shared their knowledge with us. We hope that these pages have whetted your appetite and you try some of their ciders, and are encouraged to seek out your local craft cider makers.

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Photograph by Bill Bradshaw.
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“Acaraje-Baiana” by Claudia Baiana – Own work. Licensed under Public Domain

Acarajé: Between Bahia and West Africa

Introduction:

I was born and grew up in Salvador (Bahia, Brazil). I cannot even remember the first time I saw or tasted acarajé. It is something, so to speak, that “was just there,” a normal part of my world. Its character as an emblem of place was imprinted very early on my mind in ways I cannot remember either. I just learned that in the way one acquires the identity kit of one’s land and culture, without depending on explicit teaching and without thinking about it.

Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias. Honorary Senior Research Fellow.
University of Birmingham. Interview, 2015

Acarajé, a croquette made of black-eyed peas, onion and salt, then fried in dendê (palm) oil, and served with pepper sauce and other fillings, is an archetypal street food of Salvador, the capital of Bahia, situated in the Northeast region of Brazil. This humble street snack, sold mainly by black and mixed race women known as the *baianas do acarajé*, is one of the most popular *quitutes* (or delicacies) in Afro-Bahian cuisine. Together with *abará*, which, unlike acarajé, is steamed rather than deep-fried, it is the only Afro-Bahian delicacy with a corresponding food in West African cuisine: *àkárá*.¹ As the city with the greatest concentration of black African descendents in the world, Salvador could not ask for a more apt symbol of its imperial history and urban life. Acarajé has been sold there for, at least, two hundred years, and its story is deeply intertwined with West African cuisine, as well as with female street selling framed by the Atlantic slave trade, which linked Africa, Brazil and Portugal during the early Portuguese imperial period (1500 – 1822).



Acarajé da Cira,
Itapuã, Salvador, by
Ana Martins

¹ Guilherme Radel, *A Cozinha Africana da Bahia* (Salvador: Guilherme Radel Editora, 2012), page 154.

Given its symbolic charge, it is not surprising that acarajé has been invested with ideas of authenticity over time. In this section, we will address these ideas, found in Afro-Bahian cookbooks, and in the narratives of contemporary producers and consumers currently living in Salvador and the UK. As we shall see, the articulation of acarajé's status as an authentic street food of Bahia often draws on national identity debates and myths about race and Brazil's African heritage, some of which have historically sustained racial oppression and inequality in Brazil. Acarajé's connections to West Africa, on the other hand, trigger complex authenticity questions as regards the process of cooking acarajé, and the names used on each side of the Atlantic to identify this iconic street snack.

Acarajé vs àkárá

The term acarajé is an amalgamation of two words from the Yorùbá language of Nigeria, one of the regions in West Africa affected by Portuguese slave hunting: àkárá ("beans cake") and *jẹ* ("he / she ate"). The use of the term acarajé became current in Brazil under the influence of a particular (Ijeṣa) dialect of the Yorùbá language, and of the Fon language.² However, the word acarajé is not used in Lagos and most other parts of Yorùbáland. In those regions, àkárá is employed to refer to the same street snack.

In the old days, the baianas selling acarajé in the streets of Salvador used to cry "Iê o akara!" or "Iê o abará" to attract customers, as famously performed in the song "A Preta do Acarajé," [The black woman of Acarajé] written by Brazilian composer Dorival Caymmi in 1939:

10 in the evening
in the deserted street
the black woman peddler's cry
sounds like a lament
Iê o abará
in her bowl
there's aromatic sauce
there's African pepper
there's acarajé.



"Àkárá" by Atimukoh – Own work. Licenced under CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

In the mid 1960s, our co-author Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias, Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham, moved to West Africa to live. His first encounters with the Yorùbá people of south-western Nigeria happened in the city of Lagos. He describes those occasions as a mixture of learning about unfamiliar things and recognising aspects of life that were highly familiar. This was around 1966, at a time when some of those who had moved from Salvador back to Yorùbáland at the end of the nineteenth century, or in the early twentieth century, known as Agudás, still lived there. As Paulo moved around Lagos, both Agudá and non-Agudá Lagosians

² Yeda Pessoa de Castro, *Falares africanos na Bahia: Um vocabulário afro-brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Academia Brasileira de Letras – Topbooks, 2001), pages 136, 139, for the etymologies of *acarajé* and *abará*.

gave him a sense of familiarity. While some of the older Agudás still spoke Portuguese, non-Agudá Yorùbá Lagosians did not. And yet, the latter also gave him a sense of familiarity, since their ways of behaving had been preserved by the people of Salvador in their own behaviour:

Certain ways of walking, talking, and laughing, which I observed, and people's behaviour at the markets, plus other things of which I was perhaps only half-conscious, were very much like what I had known in Salvador.

Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias. Honorary Senior Research Fellow.
University of Birmingham. Interview, 2015

Paulo recalls that he was careful to employ the term àkára when in the company of some of his Yorùbá Lagosian friends, who never failed to point out that acarajé was not the proper, “authentic” name of the snack. But one day, the question of authenticity came to the fore in a very sharp way:

This happened at the house of a new acquaintance [a non-Agudá Yorùbá Lagosian], when a conversation about abará was included in our discussions about acarajé. (In the Nigerian part of Yorùbáland, the current name for abará is moin-moin). When my new acquaintance heard that, in Bahia, we not only used the name acarajé, but also the name abará, he became quite animated. Almost jumping from his chair, he told me: “Man, you people have got it all wrong, all wrong!”

Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias. Honorary Senior Research Fellow. University of Birmingham. Interview, 2015

Remembering this episode, Paulo reflects on how shared cultural assets may have their authenticity contested when one is dealing with diasporic transferences across the Atlantic, and across the centuries. The story also highlights the role time plays in ascertaining the authenticity of the food: since àkára pre-dates the emergence of the term acarajé, it is deemed more genuine, as opposed to the latter, which is discarded as the result of a mistake or confusion, instead of being taken seriously as a product of diasporic experience.



“Bahia acarajé” by José Oliveira (flickr user) Licensed under CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Acarajé: food of the Gods

As suggested in the documentary *O Axé do Acarajé*, the term acarajé is also considered an improper word by some producers and Pais-de-Santo, who prefer to use àkárá in order to explain the uniqueness of this delicacy as a food of the Orishas (spelled “Orixás” in Brazil) – divine African ancestors in the Yorùbá religion, believed to have been created by a supreme God, who travelled to Brazil via the Atlantic slave trade.³

The authenticity of ways of naming and preparing food is, in this way, policed in Candomblé yards (or “terreiros” in Portuguese): temples where the Orishas are worshipped. Candomblé, or Macumba as it is known in certain parts of Brazil, is a religion that originated from enslaved Africans transported to the American continent during the slave trade.

As part of the tasting menu of the Orishas, Àkárá is often prepared to honour Orisha Iansã, among others. Iansã is a famous female, but virile, Orisha, known as the divinity of the winds and storms. Her Feast Day is the 4th of December, which coincides with the Catholic feast of St Barbara, revealing Bahia’s syncretism as regards African Candomblé and European Christianity.

When acarajé is offered to Iansã in Candomblé rituals, it is not halved, but accompanied by shrimp, so that its eyes may show the way to the person who does the offering. Acarajé is placed on a plate and sprinkled with olive oil or honey. Red, pink or white roses are offered, accompanied by the greeting: “Epa Hei Oyá.” When acarajé is not meant to be offered to the Orisha, it is served with pepper sauce only. All other fillings now commonly found in the streets of Salvador are considered to be inventions that end up disguising the real taste of acarajé.



“Terreiro do Jauá” by Terreiro de Jauá, Laercio Messias do Sacramento - <http://www.terreirodejaua-ba.kit.net/>. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.5 via Wikimedia Commons



“Iansã” by Eurico Zimbres. Lincensed under CC BY-SA 2.5, via Wikimedia Commons

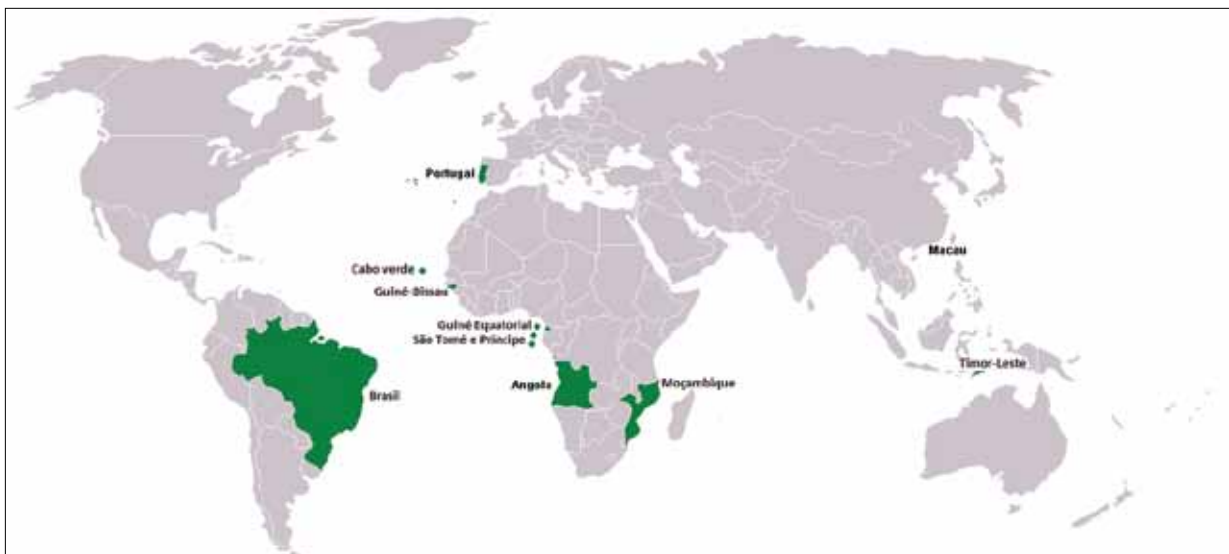
³ *Axé do Acarajé*. Dvd. Directed by Pola Ribeiro. Second edition (no date).

Triangulated encounters: between Africa, Brazil and Portugal

“I think questions about acarajé and “authenticity” (perhaps unlike questions about authenticity and, say, Mexican pulque and Welsh craft cider) are complicated by the trans-Atlantic context in which they are necessarily formulated.”

Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias. Honorary Senior Research Fellow.
University of Birmingham. Interview, 2015

When, in the sixteenth century, Portuguese navigators started to circle the globe, they introduced a variety of crops, food products and culinary cultures to a wide range of cultures, each with their own rich cuisine styles. A diverse world of shared Afro-Portuguese-Asian cuisine started to develop, extending across the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, and parts of the Pacific, from Brazil to Madeira, the Azores, Portugal, Africa, Goa, Malacca, East Timor and Macao.⁴



“Map of the Lusophone” (or Portuguese-speaking) World, by SEPRodrigues – Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Pedro Álvares Cabral arrived in what is today known as Brazil in 1500, encountering hundreds of different tribes with their own varied cultures and culinary traditions, who subsisted on agriculture, fishing, hunting and gathering. By introducing some ingredients, used traditionally in Africa, such as okra, dendê oil, and malagueta pepper, the Portuguese africanised, from a very early stage, both their own and the Brazilian Indian diets.⁵

The Portuguese Crown did not set out to effectively colonize Brazil until the mid sixteenth century, mainly because of the profits generated by commerce with India, China and the East Indies. When sugarcane plantations (called “Engenhos” in Portuguese, a word still used today to name neighbourhoods in Salvador) were set in the northeast coast of Brazil, Africans were brought to work as slaves, replacing Brazilian Indians who refused to work in captivity. This is how Africans became a substantial section of the Brazilian population.

When Nago men and women from the Yoruba regions of Nigeria and the Benin Gulf crossed the Atlantic to work as slaves in Brazil during the colonial period, they were forced to leave everything

⁴ Cherie Y. Hamilton, *Cuisines of Portuguese Encounters* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 2001)

⁵ José Honório Rodrigues, *Brasil e África: Outro Horizonte* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1964).

behind. Memories, stories, recipes, songs, religious beliefs, and oral knowledge were the only baggage allowed. This rich knowledge was put to practice in Brazil in the telling of stories, the praying to the Gods, the education of children, the working of the fields, the breeding of cattle, and the preparation of meals.



“Slave Market in Recife” by Zacharias Wagner. Licensed under the public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

As enslaved men and women began their unpaid labour as cooks in the Portuguese colonisers’ houses, they started mixing ingredients and recipes from Portuguese and African territories. These early culinary fusions may have contributed to propelling the notion, already in circulation in the early twentieth century, that Brazil was racially mixed in a unique way due to the supposedly harmonious fusion of the three races (African, Brazilian Indian, and Portuguese).

Narratives of authenticity and the myth of the three races

“the Bahian cuisine, like the ethnic formation of Brazil, also represents the fusion of Portuguese, indigenous and African. It is easy to demonstrate.”

Manuel Querino, *A Arte Culinária da Bahia*. [*Culinary Art in Bahia*] (2011 [1928]).

Canonical culinary author and forerunner scholar of African descent Manuel Querino formulates his culinary thesis by drawing on the enduring myth of the three races to address and characterise the culinary fusions found in Afro-Bahian cuisine.⁶ According to the myth, the three races have lived harmoniously in Brazil, without conflicts or contradictions.

At the time of Querino’s publication, the myth was about to be transformed into a viable source of national pride with the appearance of *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* (1933), penned by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre.⁷ Freyre defended that close relations between masters and slaves in Brazil were a by-product of Portugal’s allegedly kinder colonialism. Portuguese men’s hypersexuality, along with their ability to adapt to the tropics, Freyre argued, led to miscegenation and prevented the emergence of strict racial categories. The book further accredited the myth of the three races, leading to the erroneous belief that there was no racism in Brazil.

⁶ Manuel Querino, *A Arte Culinária na Bahia* (São Paulo: UMF Martins Fontes, 2011[1928]).

⁷ Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956).

Published only five years before Freyre's study on the development of a racially-democratic civilization in Brazil, Querino's cookbook does not simply cast Afro-Bahian cuisine as the harmonious synthesis of Portuguese, Indian and African elements. Instead, Africanness dominates the heritage of culinary mixing described by the author, and is even characterised as superior within the national landscape:

"It is clear, therefore, that Bahia holds the superiority, the excellence, the primacy in the country's culinary landscape, because the African element, with its exquisite seasoning by exotic fertilizers, profoundly changed the Portuguese delicacies, resulting in a product that is wholly national, tasty, pleasant to the most demanding tastes, something that brings forward the justified fame of Bahian cuisine."

(Manuel Querino)



"Manuel Querino" by Unknown – Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons

In other words, as far as Afro-Bahian food was concerned, European, African and Brazilian Indian stocks had indeed mixed, but it was African cuisine that had processed Portuguese (and Brazilian Indian) ingredients, and not the other way around, as Freyre would later imply.

Querino's seminal work forms the conceptual framework of more recent Afro-Bahian cookbooks. For example, Darwin Brandão's *A Cozinha Baiana* [Bahian Cuisine] (1965) follows the premise of the domination of the African side of the racial triangle, and suggests that the Africans were, from the standpoint of gastronomy, the true colonisers of Brazil.⁸

"And the result was a practice that mixed up Portuguese and African cuisines, but it was more African than Portuguese, because the cook was black."

(Darwin Brandão)



Exhibition in the National Association of the Baianas do Acarajé, Mingau, Receptivo e Similares do Estado da Bahia (ABAM), central Salvador by Ana Martins

⁸ Darwin Brandão, *A Cozinha Baiana* (Bahia: Livraria Universitária, 1948).

But Freyre's ideas also continue to influence the narratives of authenticity developed in existing cookbooks. For instance, Brandão alludes to Freyre's explanations of the colonial relationship that supposedly "invented" Brazil, by linking the act of eating to the act of eating the other (sexually):

"In the beginning of colonisation, it was the Portuguese who cooked his own meal, in the manner of his homeland. Then the black cook was introduced in the house, and she started to serve the master in the kitchen and in bed"

(Darwin Brandão)

And in a recent edition of *A Cozinha Africana da Bahia* [*African Cuisine of Bahia*] (2012), Guilherme Radel complains that Freyre did not bring the myth of reciprocal and non-domineering love and desire in a Portuguese colonial setting from the bedroom to the kitchen:

"It was a pity that [Freyre] gave more importance to the bed than to the table. He focused more on sensuality and sex in the slavery regime. (...) You can't make a painting of an epoch, as Gilberto Freyre attempted, without considering more fully the question of its cuisine. That's one of the book's defects."

(Guilherme Radel)

On the ground, the fact that the acarajé found today in the squares of Salvador is the product of a centuries-old mix of cultures is an important ingredient of authenticity for consumers today. Co-author Gloria Lanci, born in São Paulo and currently based in Bristol, acknowledges that the baiana is expected to be black in order to be considered "authentic." However, as she quickly adds, this raises the complicated issue of race in Brazil, since what the consumer of acarajé might distinguish as a "sufficiently black" baiana is something that is literally impossible to define, given that Brazil is a mixed race country:

My relationship with acarajé is a relationship with Brazilian culture, not only with African culture. Brazil is that mix (Portugal, Africa, indigenous). If I start distinguishing – this is Portuguese, this is African, this is from the Middle East – the Brazilian identity is lost. So the mix [of cultures] is part of acarajé's authenticity, just like Salvador is "sold" to tourists and Brazilians as the black capital of Brazil, from music to food, to the population.

Gloria Lanci. Academic researcher/acarajé enthusiast. Interview, 2015



Model representing the baiana do acarajé, Exhibition in the National Association of the Baianas do Acarajé, Mingau, Receptivo e Similares do Estado da Bahia (ABAM), central Salvador, by Ana Martins

Culinary citizenship: performing African authenticity via acarajé outside of Brazil

Street snacks like acarajé e abará, which I knew well from Brazil, were easily available in Lagos. I developed a trick of initiating conversations about them with Nigerian friends and acquaintances, and using those conversations as diplomatic passports to facilitate my entry into their country and conviviality.

Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias. Honorary Senior Research Fellow. University of Birmingham. Interview, 2015

As we have seen, Salvador-born Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias, now based in Birmingham, engaged throughout his life in the strategy of using food as a bridge between different cultural identities spread across the Atlantic Ocean. This is not the experience of Gloria Lanci, who, while living in Brazil, preferred not to eat acarajé outside of Salvador.

The magic of eating acarajé, Gloria explains, goes beyond the actual eating: “Because acarajé is a small cake, you eat it in 5 minutes.” The environment around it is what makes it such a special experience. This is why she is not very enthusiastic about eating acarajé in São Paulo or in Rio de Janeiro, or even in the UK. The environment is just not right outside of Salvador, and the quality of the product is not the same either, she notes. “Eating acarajé in the tube station or in the restaurant would not be the same thing.” To her, the space of the street and the warm evenings are paramount, as is the sight of the accessories used in the bancas.



Acarajé da Cira, Rio Vermelho, Salvador, by Ana Martins

Paulo's life trajectory, on the other hand, reveals an understanding of acarajé as an authentic manifestation of each country's local cuisine. And yet, Paulo also acknowledges that his understanding of acarajé (and abará) as passport(s) into an imagined homeland away from home did not always match African levels of correctness. At times, simply the word used to name the delicacies denied Paulo his desired “culinary citizenship”: a form of affective citizenship Paulo sought to activate in Nigeria via his relationship to acarajé.⁹ At other times, it was Paulo himself who traded not with names, but with tastes:

I have eaten àkárá not only in Nigeria, but also in the Republic of Benin (which includes a region that is culturally part of Yorùbáland), in Senegal (a country to which it was introduced by migrants from the Republic of Bénin), and elsewhere in West Africa. In all these countries, the oil now used in the preparation of àkárá is groundnut oil. To me, this tastes shockingly “inauthentic.” I am convinced that “true” àkàrà / acarajé has to be fried in palm oil, as it continues to be in Bahia, unlike in the African mother-countries...

⁹ Anita Mannur, “Culinary Nostalgia: Authenticity, Nationalism and Diaspora,” *MELUS*, 32:4 (2007): 11-31.

Crucially, Paulo narrativises these episodes by referring to them as a “cultural game”: the game of attaching given meanings to acts of naming and savouring food. This emphasis on “accurate” name replication and “genuine” taste reveals the impossibility of locating any acarajé / àkárá as the original, since narratives of authenticity around it are not monolithically defined across the ocean.



Salvador, a city facing West Africa. View from Pelourinho, Salvador, by Ana Martins

Staging acarajé: place, age, gender, and the aesthetics of the banca

Authenticity and the streets of Salvador

My favourite at that time was acarajé from the Praça do Rio Vermelho. It was the whole experience: going to the square on a Friday night, the place would be crowded with people, the temperature, the smell of dendê oil, all of it made me hungry! The smells, the colours of the baianas' dresses, the outside temperature, all of this produced a physical sensation that prepared me to acarajé.

Gloria Lanci. Researcher/acarajé enthusiast. Interview, 2015



Acarajé da Rosenise, Praça do Peixe, Rio Vermelho, Salvador, by Ana Martins

We have seen how the complex game of attaching cultural meanings to acarajé is associated with ritual and language use, and how it changes according to how far or how close one is from the homeland (either Brazil or West Africa).

To Salvador-born Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias, Dorival Caymmi's nostalgic song "A Preta do Acarajé," [The black woman of Acarajé] is highly evocative of the Salvador he grew up in, and of acarajé's iconic status in the city:

This song is for me now an emblem not only of place, but also of times gone by, in which Salvador streets would be empty at 10pm and the pace of city life was a lot more relaxed than now....

Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias. Honorary Senior Research Fellow. Interview, 2015

But in Gloria's narrativisation of her experiences with acarajé, authenticity is coded in her more recent memories of Salvador's bustling streets and squares. Gloria recalls the impact of her first visit to Salvador, which she made in 1998 with friends. The trip from São Paulo to Salvador was very long. To someone coming from the south of the country, Salvador was imagined as an idyllic destination: the cradle of African culture, the first capital of Brazil, the historical centre of Brazil, and a World Heritage site, as well as the land of acarajé. After almost three days driving, the city finally appeared in front of them, at sunset, splendidly golden. This is an image Gloria will never forget.

As a city, Salvador is as symbolic of Brazilian identity as Rio de Janeiro, with the difference that the centre of Salvador remains, architecturally speaking, very similar to what it was a couple of centuries ago. When Gloria thinks of acarajé, she immediately thinks of Salvador's vibrant squares. Acarajé is a very strong touristic product, she notes. "It is almost like a stamp. A product that is very simple to recognise and to relate to the city."

Gloria describes the physical setting where acarajé is sold as a sort of stage, where the banca and the baiana play central roles as intrinsic parts of the folklore.



Historical centre of Salvador, by Ana Martins

Baianas participating in the 2 de Julho celebrations in Salvador, which commemorates the independence of Bahia, by Ana Martins



While Gloria recognises that the baiana mythology is relevant to her, the most important ingredients in her recipe for an authentic acarajé experience are the city of Salvador, and the spaces of the street and the square, as well as the time of the day when acarajé is savoured. This is as important to her as the smell, the colour and the consistency of the croquette.

The physical space of the square is important to Gloria due to its visibility and functionality: this is where people gather, where the church is located, where there's space to lay out tables and be together with friends.

Street corners are also inevitable meeting points of people returning home after a day's work in the city. 67-year-old Carlos Alberto de Oliveira Ribeiro has been a regular customer of Acarajé da Neinha for the past 35 years. Neinha's banca is situated on a busy street corner of Avenida Sete de Setembro, in the Politeama area, central Salvador. When asked about the reason for his fidelity to acarajé da Neinha, Alberto replies:

"It's close to where I live. Plus, acarajés here are crunchy, toasted, just the way I like them. And what gives them their special taste is the street's seasoning," he adds, pointing to the constant traffic.

Carlos Alberto de Oliveira Ribeiro. Businessman, university teacher, acarajé enthusiast. Interview. 2015



Carlos Alberto eating Acarajé da Neinha. Salvador, by Ana Martins

From the viewpoint of the producers, the space of the street or square is also central to the cultural activity of producing acarajé as part of a ritual. The baianas have appropriated the public space of the street since colonial times, using it to exhibit not only their trade and their products, but also the importance of ancestral relationships to their business. Street corners are chosen not only for financial reasons but for spiritual reasons as well: they have to lead to three or four different directions. Also, the first acarajés that are fried every day are not meant to be sold but to be offered to the street and to the “mirim” (small) divinities. The act of offering these tiny acarajés is called a dispatch (“despacho” in Portuguese).

The choice of the exact spot where acarajé is sold thus contributes to the domestication and sacralization of the public spaces of the street and the square. When the *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional* (Iphan) named the baianas do acarajé’s activity as “Intangible Cultural Heritage of Brazil,” on December 1st, 2004, the very term “heritage” was reconfigured to encompass the banca and the selling spot, understood as the cornerstone of the baianas’ Afro-Brazilian identity, and the basis of their activity.

Authenticity and age

“I’ve been here for more than fifty years. Everyone knows me.”

Jaciara de Jesus Santo, known as Cira. Baiana do acarajé/businesswoman Interview, 2015

Cira, the award-winning baiana do acarajé, mentioned passionately by Gloria Lanci in Bristol, has her main banca in Itapuã, a neighbourhood in the outskirts of Salvador. On a warm evening seasoned by the smell of dendê oil, Cira very kindly accepts to give an interview. “My name is Jaciara de Jesus Santo, but call me Cira.” She doesn’t look very surprised when told that news of her business has reached the UK.

Cira is an extremely successful businesswoman. She currently employs thirty-five people working in her three bancas spread throughout Salvador – Itapuã, Rio Vermelho Largo da Mariquita and São Cristóvão. “I’m the head. I decide everything, I choose only first class ingredients: the big shrimp, the best beans.” With three bancas to manage, she follows a tough schedule every day:



One of Cira’s employees beats the dough while waiting for the dendê oil to boil. Cira is behind her, dealing with a customer. Cira do Acarajé, Itapuã, Salvador, by Ana Martins

Everyone helps to make the dough at home. When the dough leaves the house, it's already beaten and ready to go. In order for it to be ready by 10am, we wake up at 5am and start soaking the beans, washing the shrimp, curling the abará, making vatapá. Then we bring it all here, and sell it until 11pm, or midnight. It's very tiring, it's almost too much.

Jaciara de Jesus Santo, known as Cira. Baiana do acarajé/businesswoman. Interview, 2015

Itapuã is her most popular banca: "This was my mother's, I was just a little girl when I learned from her how to make acarajé. (...) This is where it all started."

This does not mean that young baianas do not make a good living out of selling acarajé. Often, the legacy of the mother's culinary art makes up for the baiana's age, when she is considered to be too young. When Lindinalva de Assis, widely known in and beyond Brazil as Dinha do Acarajé, died at 56 years old in 2008, her daughter, Cláudia de Assis, carried on with the family business. Dinha had learned how to prepare acarajé with her grandmother, Ubaldina de Assis, who had established a banca do acarajé in Rio Vermelho, the first in the neighbourhood, 60 years earlier. Today, Dinha's daughter, Cláudia de Assis, continues to produce acarajé under her mother's brand name, Dinha, on the same spot.

Authenticity and the aesthetics of the Baiana and her Banca

It's rush hour on a hot, late afternoon. The baiana, Dona Ângela, sits on a stool in her banca, known for the past 37 years as Acarajé da Neinha. She is placing portions of the white dough on the boiling, red dendê oil, then rolling each one over until they are done. While waiting for them to fry, she handles the customers' payment. Two other women are standing. They move tirelessly around the banca, halving acarajés and filling them with pepper sauce, vatapá, caruru, dried shrimp and salad, then handing them to the customers, who form a messy, circular queue around the banca. Dona Ângela refuses to be photographed. After some insistence, the reason for the refusal becomes clear. Dona Ângela is not looking her best.

From the viewpoint of the producers, the baiana aesthetic is central to the cultural system represented by acarajé, and it functions as a staple of authenticity, revealing not only the sellers' Africanity, but also their care for the trade, and their self-esteem. For example, Cira's strict management extends to what her female employees wear: "today I dressed them in an African style, but other days I ask them to dress in the baiana style. They all dress in the same way in all the three bancas. I decide how they dress everyday."

Gloria Lanci confirms the importance of the manner in which the baianas present themselves and their bancas. Some of the most successful baianas, such as the late Dinha, who have star status, are mentioned in books, and appear in documentaries, do not actually serve the client, but sit, fully dressed in their traditional clothes and headgear, mixing the dough, or receiving their customers' payment.



Baiana Rosenise, Praça do Peixe, Rio Vermelho, Salvador, by Ana Martins

Authenticity and gender: men and acarajé

My father is a baiano do acarajé. He doesn't dress in the baiano style, but wears the traditional chef's uniform. He works in the Barra area"

Rosenise Santana. Baiana do acarajé. Interview, 2015.

According to the baiana folklore, Gloria Lanci explains, acarajé's quality is said to depend on the hand of the baiana who mixes it. Looking back at her first encounter with acarajé, Gloria recognises that it was not very good: "The dough was a bit heavy." Later, when she moved to Salvador to work in 2006, she shopped around, and found delicious acarajés, which she ate every week. She notes that, during that period in Salvador, acarajé was regularly discussed in her circle of friends: "There was a discussion going on about the best *acarajés*, and always in relation to the baiana. (...) It was very much like discussing real ale or cider in the UK."

It is estimated that there are more than 2800 baianas do acarajé working in the area of Salvador.¹⁰ But men also work as baianos do acarajé and have their own selling pontos in Salvador.

29-year-old Rosanise Brandão Santana has a banca in Mercado do Peixe, Rio Vermelho, a neighbourhood of Salvador. She reveals, with considerable pride, that she learned how to make acarajé with her grandmother and her father, Nailton Barbosa Santos, also a baiano do acarajé and known as Baiano Cuca. "My father and my grandmother help me to beat the dough everyday."

To her mind, gender does not produce authenticity. What makes an authentic acarajé are the art of beating the dough, and the ingredients used:



Baiana Rosenise turning acarajé in the dendê oil. Praça do Peixe, Rio Vermelho, Salvador, by Ana Martins

you soak the beans, wash them, grind them and beat them until they turn into this white pasty dough. You need to beat the dough until the consistency is right. You need to know when the consistency is right. (...) The authentic acarajé has to have vatapá, dried shrimp, caruru (okra), and pepper. We cannot forget the pepper sauce, or the salad! With all that, you have the complete acarajé.

Rosenise Santana. Baiana do acarajé. Interview, 2015

Rosenise's description of her family business questions traditional gender ideologies, and suggests a more nuanced understanding of the kitchen and the banca as a place for both men and women.

However, this remains a controversial issue. Baiana Cira, who employs both men and women in her business, explains her viewpoint:

I work with men and women. Men wash the beans and carry heavy weights. Because the pans are heavy. Men don't sell acarajé, they stay at home. They can sell if they want, but I don't employ them to sell acarajé.

Jaciara de Jesus Santo, known as Cira. Baiana do acarajé/businesswoman. Interview, 2015

¹⁰ Raul Lody, introduction to *A Arte Culinária da Bahia*, by Manuel Querino.

Cira's gendered division of work reveals the changing dynamics of authenticity as regards acarajé. Although still a source of heated discussion among some baianas do acarajé, the growing presence of baianos do acarajé in the streets confirms not only the emergence of a new acarajé selling culture but also the status of acarajé as a highly rewarding trade.

Baiana Rosenise serving acarajé to a customer. Praça do Rio Vermelho, Salvador, by Ana Martins



Final thoughts

Acarajé, the star of Afro-Bahian cuisine, and the livelihood of thousands of families in Bahia, is responsible for giving both producers and consumers a strong sense of regional and ethnic rootedness, which varies according to where acarajé is produced, consumed or discussed. Although overdetermined by a past of slavery, imperialism and diasporic experiences, narratives of authenticity around acarajé are constantly evolving and changing, to reflect a multiply-defined sense of home, in linguistic, religious, and geographic terms.

“Because work can be really stressful, I need to unwind at the end of the day. So I have a beer, I eat my acarajé, and I am happy.”

Jurema Chaves. Maths teacher, nursery teacher, and secondary school teacher.
Acarajé enthusiast. Interview, 2015.



Baianas do acarajé in Itapuã, Salvador. By Ana Martins

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Acarajé classic recipe

(makes 12 acarajés approximately)

Ingredients:

- 800g black-eyed peas
- 2 onions, minced
- 1 small unpeeled onion
- dendê oil to fry
- salt to taste
- (garlic is sometimes added)

Method:

- one day before cooking, soak the black-eyed peas
- on the day, peel them, then grind them in a food processor until they turn into a pasty dough
- mix the dough with the minced onions and salt, then beat the dough well with a wooden spoon until bubbles form and surface
- in a frying pan, heat dendê oil, then place the small onion in the pan before the oil heats into a boil to prevent it from burning/acidifying
- with a tablespoon, place portions of the dough on the boiling dendê oil for them to fry
- make sure the dendê oil level is high enough so that the dough portions do not touch the pan bottom
- after fried for 3 minutes, roll each dough portion over, to fry on the other side. After about 2 more minutes the acarajés will be done
- serve them hot and plain, or halved with pepper sauce spread over the halves. One may also eat acarajés with boiled dried shrimp cooked in dendê oil sandwiched in between their halves.

(In *A Cozinha Africana da Bahia* [*African Cuisine of Bahia*], by Guilherme Radel, pp. 454)



Glossary

- Abará:** Very similar to acarajé. Its main ingredient is black-eyed pea, but unlike acarajé, it is steam-boiled rather than deep-fried. The portions are enveloped in banana tree leaves and then steamed, without any contact with the water. Takes approximately 30 minutes to cook (in bain-marie). Its taste is more delicate than acarajé's. It must be served hot and on the leaf where it was cooked.
- Acarajé:** the most popular and well-known food in Afro-Bahian cuisine. Its main ingredient is black-eyed pea, and it is deep-fried. Africans did not know how to fry food, and the art of frying must have been introduced there via the Arabic cuisine. Acarajé is found in the trays of baianas do acarajé. It is also used as an appetizer (see "tira-gosto") in receptions and conferences. Since 2004, it is considered "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Brazil."
- Baiana do acarajé:** job description of women who sell acarajé and other delicacies of Afro-Bahian cuisine in the streets of Salvador and other Brazilian cities. Apart from acarajé, they also sell other products, such as abará, bolinho do estudante and cocadas.
- Banca / ponto:** name of the space where acarajé is sold in the streets and squares. The bigger pontos have their own tent, with the name of the baiana printed in large letters. The Portuguese expression "fazer o ponto" means to make regular clients.
- Bolinho do estudante:** Afro-Brazilian delicacy made with cassava, coconut, sugar and cinnamon. Deep-fried.
- Candomblé:** word that refers to the Afro-Brazilian religion practised in Brazil and other countries of Latin America. In parts of Brazil, Candomblé is known as Macumba.
- Caruru:** typical dish of Afro-Bahian cuisine. Boiled okra accompanied with shrimp, fish or meat, and seasoned with dendê oil and pepper. Used in Candomblé rituals. Takes approximately 30 minutes to cook.
- Cocada:** a traditional Afro-Bahian sweet made with coconut.
- Dendê oil:** a thick, dark, reddish-orange, strong-flavoured oil extracted from the pulp of a fruit from a type of palm tree. It is used in cooking in West Africa and in Brazil.
- Dried shrimp:** small shrimp that has been sundried. When choosing it, pay attention to its colour: it should look reddish and bright. Needs to be soaked in water before using.
- Moqueca:** a word probably of Brazilian Indian origin for a type of stew made with fish or seafood and seasoned with onions, tomatoes, green peppers, dendê oil and malagueta pepper.
- Orixá:** a spirit that is seen as a manifestation of God in the Yorùbá religion. There are a total of 401 Orixás. They have found their way to Latin America via the Atlantic slave trade. Orixá Iansã is a fan of acarajé.
- Quiabo:** okra. An essential ingredient to many Brazilian dishes often prepared and served during the festivities of Candomblé.
- Quitute:** word that comes from the Quimbundu "kitutu," meaning delicacy or treat.
- Tira-gosto:** small portions of food that you eat in-between meals, either to appease hunger or as an appetiser
- Vatapá:** typical dish of Afro-Bahian cuisine. Shrimp and bread pudding. Takes approximately 30 minutes to cook.

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